

Netanyahu wants to be like Arnold

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has a reputation for being a tough negotiator, is expected to visit the Los Angeles area on Wednesday.

Dinner for three? That will be \$22,000, please

Banker turns back on \$10 million salary to become president

Stallone turns down record fee for film in his old style

Over 100 people executed in Sudan in eight years — justice minister

Khartoum (AFP) — Over 100 people have been executed in Sudan in accordance with Islamic Sharia laws since the present government came to power in June 1989, Justice Minister Abdul Basir Sabdarat has said.

Napoleon's even might: Josephine letter comes up for auction

Israeli army nabs Palestinian from autonomy zone

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli undercover agents have abducted a suspected Islamist from inside a town controlled by Palestinian National Authority (PNA), military sources said on Wednesday. Ziad Kamel, 22, was abducted Monday from an industrial zone in the West Bank town of Jenin by Israeli soldiers disguised as Palestinian civilians, the sources said. Witnesses reported seeing unknown men beat Mr. Kamel and throw him into a car bearing West Bank licence plates. Israeli military sources said Mr. Kamel was a militant of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and was suspected of involvement in bombings three years ago which killed about 10 people in the northern Israeli towns of Afula and Hadera in anti-Israeli attacks.

Jordan Times

An independent political daily published by the Jordanian Press Foundation
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Iraqi women urged to join Fedayeen of Saddam

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi newspapers on Wednesday called on women to volunteer for the "Fedayeen (fighters) of Saddam" to defend the country in case of U.S. attack. They said 350 female students had already offered to sign up for the paramilitary force, which is headed by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday.

Commission expected to exonerate Netanyahu in spy scandal

TEL AVIV (AP) — A commission investigating Israel's attempted assassination of a Hamas leader in Jordan is expected to exonerate Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, an Israeli newspaper said Wednesday. In its interim report, to be submitted within two weeks, the panel will place much of the blame for the Sept. 25 operation on Mossad chief Danny Yatom and other senior officials in the spy agency, the Haaretz newspaper said. Mr. Netanyahu was widely criticised for ordering the assassination which, even if successful, was sure to hurt relations with Jordan.

Arafat departs for India to discuss peace process

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat departed Tuesday for a two-day visit to India that will include meetings with Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and other political leaders, President Arafat's office said. President Arafat will discuss with the leaders the deadlock in the peace process in an effort to muster support against Israel, his spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeina, told AFP.

Turkey says 11 Kurd rebels killed in clashes

DIYARBAKIR (R) — Turkish security forces have killed 11 Kurdish separatist guerrillas in clashes in the remote southeast during the last two days, a statement by the emergency rule governor's office said Wednesday. It said four members of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) had been killed in the provinces of Diyarbakir, Hakkari, Bingol, Mardin and Tunceli since Tuesday. Another five rebels were captured in the fighting, the statement said.

Over 100 people executed in Sudan in eight years — justice minister

Khartoum (AFP) — Over 100 people have been executed in Sudan in accordance with Islamic Sharia laws since the present government came to power in June 1989, Justice Minister Abdul Basir Sabdarat has said. Out of 891 death sentences passed for murder, 109 have been carried out, while three people convicted of armed robbery have been hanged and five others had their right hands amputated for theft, he told parliament Tuesday, according to local press reports. Three women were sentenced to being stoned to death for adultery but the sentence was not carried out because the adulterers withdrew their confessions, the minister added.

King, Cook review Middle East peace process, Iraq-U.N. crisis

LONDON (Agencies) — His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Wednesday met with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and discussed with him the Middle East peace process and the Iraq-U.N. crisis, Jordan Television reported yesterday.

King Hussein stressed the need for dialogue and diplomacy as a means to solve the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations.

"I certainly hope that all the efforts being (currently) made will avert violence and will bring about a satisfactory solution to the problem," the King told WTN television.

Asked whether he saw a split in the coalition that drove Iraq out of Kuwait in 1991, the King said: "I am unaware of any split, but there is a general attempt by all to tackle the problem as soon as possible."

Asked if he thought any party would resort to the use of military power to resolve the crisis that resulted from Iraq's expulsion of U.S. inspectors from Iraq early this month, the King said: "I certainly hope it will not come to that. I think that in the region there is a need for easing what the Iraqis have been through."

Asked what message he would address to the Iraqi leadership, the King replied: "My message is that we hope that

we will see acts of wisdom and courage in trying to resolve problems for a better future for the entire region."

Prince Hassan had earlier in the day left Amman to join the King and is expected to travel to Brussels on Monday to attend the signing of the Jordanian-European Union (EU) association agreement. During his stay in London, the Crown Prince will also deliver a lecture on behalf of the King at London's Chamber of Commerce.

HRH Prince Mohammad, the King's personal representative, was sworn in as Regent before the Crown Prince and in the presence of the Council of Ministers.

The King on Tuesday night met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu near London, an Israeli government spokesman said on Wednesday. The two leaders held more than two hours of talks in Ascot late on Tuesday on the developing crisis in Iraq and other Middle East issues, Mr. Netanyahu's spokesman Shai Bazak said.

It was their first meeting since relations soured over an Israeli assassination attempt on a Hamas leader in Amman, Israel Radio said.

"The goal of the meeting in part was to achieve conciliation after the memorable affair in Jordan which shook relations



HRH Prince Mohammad, the Regent, and Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali bid HRH Crown Prince Hassan a good journey before his departure Wednesday to join His Majesty the King in London (Photo by Boghos)

between the countries," Mr. Bazak told the radio.

"The way it appeared at the end of the meeting, the relations between the prime minister and King Hussein certainly looked good," he said.

Israeli media had contended that the King initiated the meeting to ensure Israel would not violate Jordan's sovereignty should the Gulf standoff develop into hostilities between Iraq and Israel.

In the 1991 Gulf war, Iraq launched waves of missile attacks on Israel but they refrained from retaliation at the request of U.S. ally.

Israel's deputy defence minister said last week Israel could not be expected to sit still if attacked by Iraq.

Mr. Netanyahu assured the King that he was interested in seeing the U.N.-Iraq standoff resolved without force, Mr. Netanyahu's senior aide said Wednesday.

Mr. Netanyahu's press advisor, David Bar-Ilan said the Israeli prime minister "expressed the hope that the present conflict with Iraq will end without violence."

Both the Israeli and Jordanian embassies in London said statements after the meeting were unlikely. The official Jordanian media did not mention the meeting between the King and Mr. Netanyahu, but Jordan Television reported from London last night about the other rounds of meetings that His Majesty and the Crown Prince held with British leaders.

Annan urges tying weapon inspections to 'oil-for-food'

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said Tuesday it would be appropriate to discuss the weapons inspections stand-off together with the oil-for-food programme in setting the Iraqi crisis. "I think if we are looking at the whole Iraqi programme, it's appropriate to look at both the inspections issues and the effectiveness of the oil-for-food scheme, which has been raised as an issue by the Iraqis and other governments in the region," Mr. Annan told reporters.

Mr. Annan's statement comes after Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Sahhaf appealed to Mr. Annan to intervene directly in resolving the arms control impasse. Security Council Resolution 986, or the so-called "oil for food" deal, allows Iraq to sell \$2 million worth of oil every six months to pay for imported food and medicine. Oil sales also pay for the U.N. arms-inspection team and for war reparations to Kuwait. Iraq accuses the United States for delays in implementing the swap.

For their part, U.S. officials say they are amenable to softening the resolution — for example, allowing Baghdad to sell more oil — providing Iraq first retreats from its bellicose stance. The arms inspections stand-off — marked by the U.N. weapons inspection team's departure from Iraq, and recent decisions to beef up U.S. military presence in the Gulf — was triggered last month when Iraq announced it would expel all U.S. arms inspectors from the country (see separate story).

Israel to beef up military presence in south Lebanon

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel plans to beef up units defending its self-declared security zone in southern Lebanon to better counter an upsurge in attacks by Syrian-backed guerrillas, military sources said Wednesday.

Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and army chiefs decided at a meeting Tuesday to improve the defences around Israeli bases and to increase protection on tanks and other vehicles deployed in the buffer zone, they said.

There has been growing concern in Israel in recent weeks over the increasing boldness of attacks on army bases in south Lebanon by guerrillas of the Shiite Muslim militia Hizbollah.

A Hizbollah squad succeeded last month in moving up to the perimeter of one base in an apparent bid to kidnap an Israeli soldier while other units recently carried out attacks almost up to Israel's northern border.

Hizbollah guerrillas have also reportedly had new success in attacking Israel's most modern tank, the Merkava II, forcing defence contractors to hunt for ways to strengthen the vehicle's armour.

In addition to strengthening defences around Israel's troops, Mr. Mordechai ordered the army to "improve the offensive capability" of combat units in south Lebanon, the sources said. They did not elaborate.

Speaking to reporters after Tuesday's meeting, Mr. Mordechai reiterated the government's rejection of public calls for Israel to withdraw from the buffer zone it occupied in south Lebanon.

Labour Party deputy, Yossi Beilin, earlier this month formed a new political movement to press for a unilateral withdrawal, saying less Israeli blood would be spilled defending the country's northern border than maintaining the security zone.

So far this year 39 Israeli soldiers have been killed in south Lebanon — the highest toll since Israel created its self-proclaimed security zone in 1985.

Egyptian president denies links to failed coup attempt in Qatar

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has denied any link between his country and a failed bid to topple the Qatari government in 1994, the government press here reported on Wednesday.

"Egypt does not interfere in the internal affairs of Arab countries and has no link whatsoever with allegations of a bid to topple the Qatari government," Mr. Mubarak said, according to Al Akhbar daily.

He stressed that two Egyptians suspected of involvement in the failed coup "are retired army officers who had a temporary work contract with the Qatari government."

"If these two officers were involved in the bid they [Qataris] should prosecute them," he said.

Earlier this month Qatar accused Egypt of backing the February 1994 coup attempt. The Qatari foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad Ben Jasssem Thani, said an Egyptian press campaign against Doha in the weeks preceding a regional conference here was "aimed at Qatar, particularly after the failure of the coup two years ago."

The war of words between Egypt and Qatar intensified Wednesday as Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said his country "would not let pass insults" against it from Qatar.

"I will not comment on the insults, but we will react [to them]," Mr. Musa replied when asked by a reporter about recent Qatari charges that Cairo "lied" in objecting to the regional economic conference held in Doha this week.

On Monday Sheikh Hamad said Egypt's calls to cancel the Middle East and North Africa economic conference in Doha was "just about settling scores." He added that the Egyptians "do nothing but lie." Egypt had called for cancelling the Doha conference, in which Israel participated, over a lack of new steps by Israel to break deadlocks in the Middle East peace process.

"There are many countries which did not attend, but there is no big fuss," Sheikh Hamad said, adding that only Egypt had begun an "unjustified" press campaign against the meeting, which Cairo hosted last year.

The Doha conference closed on Tuesday.

FMs fly to Geneva for urgent talks after news of possible solution to Iraqi crisis

GENEVA (AFP) — Foreign ministers of Britain, France, Russia and the United States on Wednesday headed for Geneva for urgent talks on the Iraqi weapons crisis as Moscow said it had a possible solution in hand.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright cut short her visit to India to make her way towards the middle-of-the-night talks with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and his French and Russian counterparts Hubert Vedrine and Yevgeny Primakov.

Mr. Primakov arrived in Geneva at 12:45 p.m. local time.

"I am expecting a great deal from today's meeting," was all he said on touching down at the airport. He immediately headed for the Russian mission to the U.N.

The other foreign ministers were expected to arrive later in the day, diplomatic sources said.

It was not yet clear whether China, the other permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, would be represented at the meeting scheduled for around 1:00 a.m. on Thursday at Geneva airport.

U.S. State Department Spokesman James Rubin, speaking in New Delhi prior to Ms. Albright's departure for Geneva on Wednesday, said the meeting aimed to "see whether the diplomacy that we encouraged by the Russians and others has yielded fruit."

The crisis erupted on Oct. 29 when President Saddam Hussein decided to expel U.S. members of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of dismantling his country. The expulsions were carried out last Thursday.

Mr. Rubin said a return to work by UNSCOM inspectors would have to be unconditional.

Mr. Primakov has said the aim of his country's initiative was to "avert an armed confrontation."

The plan includes "Iraq complying with U.N. resolutions," Mr. Primakov said, adding that "at the same time the work of the Special Commission must continue."

As Russia seized the diplomatic initiative, the U.S. moved to beef up its air power in the Gulf, while in Baghdad, Iraq vowed it would not make concessions in the showdown over U.N. arms inspections and sanctions.

"Everyone must understand that Iraq cannot make concessions on its demands, whether it be through dialogue or other means," said Ath-Thawra, organ of the ruling Baath Party.

It said Iraq's demands were "just and legitimate, and any diplomatic effort or any dialogue must be based on these demands," notably a lifting of

the economic sanctions in force since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"Iraq does not want military confrontation and prefers the language of diplomacy to that of arms," said Ath-Thawra, adding that Baghdad's position was one of "legitimate self-defence."

The Russian plan was discussed Tuesday during talks between Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who has exchanged letters with President Hussein and Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.

U.S. President Bill Clinton, meanwhile, has ordered six F-117 Stealth fighters to Kuwait and six B-52 bombers to the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

"We cannot accept another dictator with weapons of mass destruction," the president said, referring to the suspension of UNSCOM inspections of Iraq's arsenals.

Egypt revises security after Luxor massacre

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's new interior minister began work on Wednesday planning tough new measures to boost security after police were blamed for failing to prevent the massacre of about 60 tourists by Islamists in the southern resort of Luxor.

Security sources said Major-General Habib Adli met with his assistants deep into the night to draft a plan aimed at bringing back tourists scared off by Monday's massacre, the bloodiest so far by Islamists seeking to set up an Islamist state in Egypt.

"There will be special emphasis on all the issues which needed revamping to boost stability and security," Maj. Gen. Habib, 59, told reporters shortly after he was sworn in on Tuesday.

Witnesses said at least six gunmen slaughtered groups of tourists in a three-hour long killing spree. They said police showed up at least an hour later.

The prosecutors' office in Luxor blamed the attack on "gross negligence" by police Islamists trying to cripple the vital tourist industry have targeted foreign visitors in their five-year armed campaign to topple the government.

Maj. Gen. Habib, who was assistant interior minister for state security, replaces Hassan Alfi who has been dogged by militant violence since he came to office in 1993. Mr. Alfi has been criticised for the lax security at the temple where at least 58 tourists and four Egyptians died.

There was no official word on whether Mr. Alfi had resigned or had been dismissed.

In Luxor, some 500 km south of Cairo, hundreds of tourists were still waiting to be flown home after several European countries issued warnings against coming to Egypt.

Dozens of others were evacuated earlier on Tuesday.

"People want to go on holiday and not into a war zone," said Johannes Zumeiden, the director of Bonn's Phoenix travel agency, which had 182

customers cancel holidays by noon.

More than half the dead were Swiss and Ambassador Blaise Godet told reporters he feared there were even more of his nationals among the 17 bodies still to be identified.

"We are still checking fingerprints. The bodies will be repatriated tomorrow," he said on Tuesday after accompanying Swiss Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti on a short visit to Cairo to visit the wounded.

Egypt's \$3-billion-a-year tourism industry is a major foreign currency earner. Analysts said the economy, and particularly the stock market, was likely to falter after the attack but brushed off any long-term effects.

Egypt's largest militant group, the Jamaa Islamiyah (Islamic group) has claimed responsibility.

The group said 15 of its members staged the attack and that four were killed and two captured. Egyptian officials say only six attackers were

involved and all were killed.

On Tuesday, President Hosni Mubarak visited the blood-spattered temple in Luxor and vowed to tighten security for tourists. "We will fill the gaps they [the attackers] went through," he said, after reporters saw him berating Mr. Alfi.

In Bonn on Tuesday, German foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, said the Egyptian government needed to work much harder to protect tourists.

Mr. Kinkel said that even though it was nearly impossible to stop "fanatic terrorists," Egypt still had to do a better job.

Monday's massacre coincides with the beginning of the key winter tourist season. More than two million visitors to Egypt flock to Luxor, home to magnificent pharaonic tombs and temples.

Nearly 1,200 people, mostly Islamists and policemen, have been killed in political violence since 1992.

Israel demolishes bedouin homes

MAALEH ADUMIM (AFP) — The Israeli army demolished four bedouin cardboard and tin shacks Wednesday because they were on state land, witnesses and officials said.

Angry bedouin residents shouted as bulldozers guarded by Israeli soldiers levelled the homes and animal pens on the desert road between Jerusalem and the West Bank town of Jericho.

"Four families settled on state-owned land were removed today," the army's civil administration spokesman, Peter Lerner, told AFP.

"They had received all orders to move and this was according to law." The families had not appealed the order to move, Mr. Lerner added.

The army has destroyed dozens of homes of the same tribe, the Jahalin, located nearby to make room for the expansion of the adjacent Maaleh Adumim settlement, which has 20,000 residents.



A bedouin Arab woman from the Jahalin tribe holds her week-old baby while she protests the demolition of her family encampment by Israeli authorities Wednesday as the infant's father looks on (Reuters photo)

Twenty-three more slaughtered in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Twenty-three people have been slaughtered in Algeria since Sunday in a fresh escalation of the country's bloody political violence, according to press reports.

Twelve people were killed in two massacres Sunday and Monday, reports said Wednesday. This was in addition to 11 reported dead the previous day in other incidents over the same period.

The latest reports of continuing mass bloodshed in Algeria came after

Amnesty International raised to 80,000 the estimated number of deaths in a five-year Islamist insurgency against the military-backed regime.

Algeria's chronic political bloodshed had temporarily subsided into relative calm around the period of local elections held Oct. 23.

But reports Wednesday spoke of the massacre of seven members of one family on the outskirts of the capital and five others murdered at Tadjena, near Cherif to the west of Algiers.

An armed group descended on the Algiers district of Sidi Medjeber late Sunday and attacked the family in their home, slitting the throats of four people and disappearing with three others, reported the daily Al Watan.

The three were found decapitated the next day in the nearby neighbourhood of Frais Vallon, said the newspaper.

Al Watan also reported a clash between armed gangs and security forces in Frais Vallon, but gave no details

of casualties.

The newspapers Liberte and Al Khabar reported five dead in the slaughter in Tadjena late Monday, but gave no further details of the attack or its victims.

Previous reports, on Tuesday, described the killings of 11 people in attacks on the Algerian-Moroccan border in the west and near M'sila, southeast of the capital, over two days.

At least 48 were murdered last week in the western region of Tlemcen and in Blida in the south,

according to press reports.

No-one has claimed responsibility for these latest massacres, but the press routinely attributes them to armed Islamists — often referred to simply as "terrorists."

Amnesty International called for an international enquiry into civilian massacres, which President Liamine Zouari has so far systematically rejected. It also urged armed opposition groups to cease targeting civilians.

Gulf slams Luxor attack as anti-Islamic, points finger at Israel

DUBAI (AFP) — Gulf Arab states said Wednesday the Luxor attack claimed by Islamists was anti-Islamic, joining in the world's condemnation of the massacre of foreign tourists in Egypt.

Newspapers, meanwhile, pointed a finger of blame at Israel, saying the slaughter was aimed at weakening Egypt as part of the Jewish state's policy of sabotaging the peace process.

The president of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Nahayan, "strongly condemned this criminal act which is contrary to the teachings of Islam."

The assailants were "doing the work of the enemies of their country," Sheikh Zayed said, adding that had been "pushed by foreign services which aim to damage the security and stability of Egypt."

The Bahraini foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammad Ben Mubarak Khalifa, said his country "denounces the terrorist attack of Luxor and hopes those responsible for this crime will be punished."

"Bahrain stands alongside Egypt, and countries around the world must fight against all forms of terrorism," he said.

In Kuwait, the editor-in-chief of the Arab Times newspaper said the carnage was "definitely not an Egyptian act and is alien to the nature of the Egyptian people."

"We are almost certain that Israel is the mastermind behind the massacre," said Ahmad Jarallah.

"The Luxor slaughter was executed by Jewish hands, the same hands which had plotted against the sovereignty of Jordan and the same hands which attempted to assassinate" a Palestinian Islamist leader in Amman in September, he wrote.

"Their objective is to abort the peace process as envisioned by the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu."

The newspaper Gulf Today in the UAE put at least part of the blame on the Egyptian government for its repression of its Islamist opponents and use of military courts which impose death sentences.

"It is this harsh measure which provoked the militants' retaliation," it said. "Both the government and the militants have to return to democratic ways to solve the problems facing Egypt."

Another UAE daily, the Gulf News, called on "Islamic organisations around the world to condemn this killing and urge those responsible to stop resorting to violence which is altogether anti-Islamic."

Egypt's main armed Islamist group, the Jamaa Islamiyah, claimed the attack on Monday outside an ancient temple in the southern town of Luxor that killed 68 people, 58 of them tourists.

Panel expected to exonerate Netanyahu in spy scandal

TEL AVIV (AP) — A commission investigating Israel's attempted assassination of a Hamas leader in Jordan is expected to exonerate Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, an Israeli newspaper said Wednesday.

In its interim report, to be submitted within two weeks, the panel will place much of the blame for the Sept. 25 operation on Mossad chief Danny Yatom and other senior officials in the spy agency, the Haaretz newspaper said.

Both Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Yatom have testified before the commission.

The attempt on Hamas political leader Khalid Misha'al triggered a scandal that strained Israel's ties with Jordan, its closest friend in the Arab World, and forced Mr. Netanyahu to release Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in a prisoner swap.

Mr. Netanyahu was widely criticised for ordering the assassination which, even if successful,

was sure to hurt relations with Jordan.

Israel's armed forces chief of staff and the head of the Shin Bet security services have said they were not consulted when the Mossad planned the attack on Mr. Misha'al.

The panel, which was appointed by the government, has itself been controversial. The opposition has called it toothless and called instead for a state commission of inquiry with subpoena powers.

Former British diplomats mark 50th anniversary of Arabic school

SHEMLAN (AP) — About 60 former British diplomats, civil servants and their wives have returned here to mark the 50th anniversary of the school where they learnt Arabic.

In one way it is a sad anniversary. The renowned school, the Middle East Centre for Arabic Studies (MECAS), does not exist anymore.

It closed in 1978 as Lebanon's civil war raged around this mountain village outside Beirut. Builders are now converting the school into an orphanage for a local Islamic charity.

But such was its reputation, and so fond are the memories, that scores of alumni accepted invitations to anniversary celebrations this week.

On Wednesday, the former students visited one of Lebanon's archaeological treasures, the ancient city of Baalbek. Later this week they will attend dinners and visit other tourist sites before returning home Sunday.

"It was a wonderful home," Sir John Wilton, 75, said of Shemlan Centre, as the school was better known. He learned Arabic there in 1947-49 and

served as a British diplomat in Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

"We've always described Shemlan Centre as a place inside paradise," said Mr. Wilton's wife, Lady Maureen, who came back with him this week. She, too, knew the school in the old days as she accompanied her husband there, but did not attend classes.

The Wiltons recalled how difficult it was to learn Arabic. They remembered, too, how pleasant it was to hike with fellow students down the mountain to the Mediterranean coast.

"We worked hard in the morning and in the afternoon, when we went down to the swim or a walk we had to remember the plural of saffir [Arabic for ambassador] was saffara and the plural of kounbula [Arabic for bomb] was kanabil," said Sir Julian Bullard, who later served in Britain's embassies in Amman and Dubai and retired from the foreign service as ambassador to West Germany.

MECAS was established in 1945 in Jerusalem, then under British mandate, to train foreign office staff in the Arabic language. These were the days when Britain's interests in the Middle East ranged from protectorates and colonies such as Sudan and Aden (now part of Yemen) to newly emergent nations, such as Jordan and Iraq.

In 1947, as British control of Palestine was winding down, the school moved to Shemlan, some 20 kilometres northeast of Beirut.

Such was the quality of its teaching that banks, oil corporations and other companies with interests in the Middle East also began to enrol their staff at Shemlan and subsidise it.

Sir James Craig, Shemlan's former principal instructor, said in an address at the American University of Beirut this week that MECAS's total of 1,100 students came from 97 organisations, of which 51 were not British.

For three decades, the school trained future diplomats, bankers, and businessmen from Britain, Germany, Japan,



IRAQI WOMAN PROTESTING: An Iraqi woman Wednesday shouts anti-American slogans as she carries her baby at a plant in U'sifiya, Iraq. She came to offer herself and her baby as human shield against a possible American attack (AP photo)

Arafat denounces 'media propaganda' on ill-health rumours

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat hit out Wednesday at "mass media propaganda" which he said was behind persistent rumours that his health is failing.

"You can see, I'm feeling well and am in good health despite all the mass media propaganda against my health," Mr. Arafat told reporters before leaving for an official visit to India.

Mr. Arafat has seemed exhausted, trembling and distracted during a number of recent public appearances, prompting speculation that the 69-year-old political leader was suffering from potentially serious health problems.

Israeli neurologists questioned about Mr. Arafat's symptoms said he could be suffering from Parkinson's dis-

ease, a degenerative nerve disorder.

But they stressed that even if Mr. Arafat had the disease, there was no indication that it had reached a debilitating stage.

Mr. Arafat aides and foreign diplomats who have met with him recently said he continued a long tradition of working day and night and remained alert even through lengthy meetings.

Asked by reporters about his apparent feebleness following a meeting Saturday in Bern with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Mr. Arafat said some of the symptoms noted by observers were simply due to overwork and others were the result of injuries he suffered in a 1992 airplane crash.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

14:10...New Kids on the Block
14:30...My Little Fairy Tale
15:00...America's Funniest People
15:30...He Shoots, He Scores
16:00...National Geographic
16:30...The Boy From Andromeda
17:00...French Programmes
19:00...News in French
19:15...French Programmes
19:30...News Headlines
19:35...Trivial Pursuit
20:00...Parenthood
20:30...Lois and Clark — Superman
21:10...Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00...News in English
22:30...Feature Film: "Isy Returns"
23:59...Music Show

Friday Programmes

14:10...The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin
14:30...Fred and Barney
15:00...Wishbone
15:30...Lucky Luke
16:00...Family Matters
16:30...Doc — Natural Wonders of Europe
17:00...French Programmes
19:30...News Headlines
19:35...Doc — Life on the Internet
20:00...Comedy — Are You Being Served
20:30...Brisco County
21:10...The History Makers
22:00...News in English
22:30...Mini-series
23:30...Daddy's Girls

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

PRAYER TIMES

04:43...Fajr
06:04...Sunrise/Duha
11:21...Dhuhr
14:14...Asr
16:39...Maghreb
17:59...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 632826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5516245
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
It will be sunny to partly cloudy with temperatures around average and winds southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman...10/22
Aqaba...14/28
Deserts...07/23
Jordan Valley...14/27

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 21, Aqaba 27 Humidity readings: Amman 32 per cent. Aqaba 27 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Hakeem...5519220
Dr. Rami Sukkar...856457
Dr. Ghazi Abu Shalab...752405
Dr. Youssef Al Faghi...790104
Firas pharmacy...661912
Ferdous pharmacy...778336
Al Asema pharmacy...637055
Nairoukh pharmacy...623672
Al Salam pharmacy...636730

Yacoub pharmacy...644945
Shmeisani pharmacy...637660
Najib pharmacy...847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qam...281484
Al Quds pharmacy...(-)
ZARQA:
Dr. Fahd Jaber...984549
Khalifeh pharmacy...985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre...637111
Civil Defence Department...661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue...630341
Civil Defence Emergency...199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade...617101
Blood Bank...775121
Highway Police...843402
Traffic Police...896390
Public Security Department...630321
Hotel Complaints...605800
Price Complaints...661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints...897467
Amman Municipality Complaints...787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)...121
Overseas Calls...010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs...623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs...661101
Jordan Television...773111

Radio Jordan...774111
Water Authority...680100
Jordan Electricity Authority...815615
Electric Power Company...636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Int'l Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre...813813/32
Khalidi Maternity...642381/6
Al-Jah Maternity...642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity...642362
Malhas, J. Amman...636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital...669131
University Hospital...845845
Al-Muasher Hospital...66727/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali...664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen...777101/3
Al-Bashir...775111/26
Army, Marka...891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital...602240/50
Amal Hospital...674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery...865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital...109983323
Zarqa National Hospital

09/800560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Moderna Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)755555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)722775
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)347100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (05)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified.
Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or (08)53250.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15...Sanaa (RJ)
08:25...Bombay (RJ)
09:15...Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30...New Delhi (RJ)
10:05...Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:05...Beirut (RJ)

10:15...Colombo (RJ)
10:20...Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
15:00...New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:25...London (RJ)
17:20...Moscow (RJ)
18:05...Kuwait (RJ)
18:05...Athens (RJ)
18:55...Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
20:45...Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
22:50...Athens (RJ)

Other Flights

13:15...Riyadh (SV)
14:10...Sharjah (AH)
15:00...Doha (QR)
15:20...Muscat, Doha (GF)
16:00...Dubai (EK)
16:30...Rome (AZ)
20:00...Tel Aviv (MS)
20:40...Cairo (MS)
23:10...Istanbul (TK)
23:30...London, Beirut (BA)
23:35...Laraca (CY)

Royal Wings (RW)

(For Thursday and Friday)
07:45...Aqaba (RW)
09:05...Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50...Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20...Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30...Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:20...Aqaba (RW)
22:50...Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20...Beirut (RJ)
07:25...Moscow (RJ)

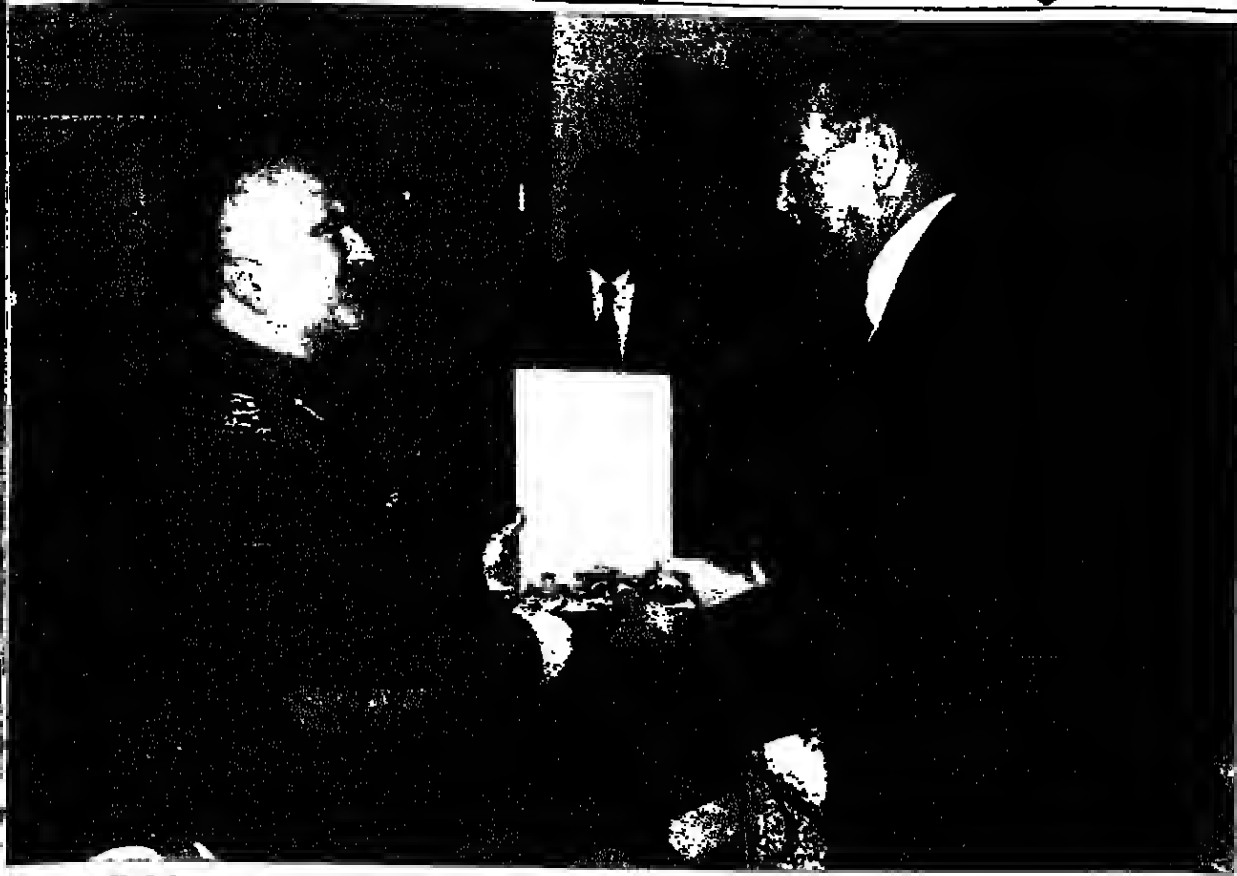
11:00...Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:30...Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:00...Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
12:05...Kuwait (RJ)
12:10...Paris (RJ)
12:15...London (RJ)
12:20...Athens (RJ)
17:00...Abu Dhabi, Jakarta (add) (RJ)
19:35...Laraca (RJ)
20:10...Cairo (RJ)
20:30...Jeddah (RJ)
22:30...Jakarta (RJ)
23:30...Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

00:35...Amsterdam (KL)
03:00...Athens (OA)
06:40...Beirut, London (BA)
08:00...Beirut (ME)
11:20...London (BA)
14:45...Riyadh (SV)
15:00...Algiers (AH)
15:55...Doha (QR)
16:20...Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
17:00...Muscat, Dubai (EK)
17:30...Rome (AZ)
21:20...Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40...Cairo (MS)

Royal Wings

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06:45...Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
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16:45...Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55...Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30...Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50...Aqaba (RW)



REGENT CONFERS ISTIQLAL MEDAL: Deputising for His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Tuesday confers Jordan's Independence (Istiqal) Medal of the First Order upon Fayez Jaber, the outgoing secretary general of the Royal Commission for Jerusalem Affairs, in recognition of his dedicated efforts and services. Prince Hassan, who chairs the commission, appointed Abdullah Kana'n as the new secretary general of the commission. Attending the medal presentation were Director of Prince Hassan's office Husam Abu Ghazaleh (to Mr. Jaber's right) and Abdullah Kana'n (centre). (Photo by Boghos)

Council secretary general visits to coordinate on upcoming meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — The council secretary general of the Arab League, Ahmad Salem, Wednesday said he is visiting Jordan as part of a tour of Arab countries to consult and coordinate on subjects in the agenda of the council's 15th meeting, to be held in Tunis early in January 1998.

The council members will discuss important issues including a plan for the implementation of a pan-Arab strategy on combating terrorism and an agreement on this issue, Dr. Salem said in a meeting here with Minister of Interior Nafith Rashid.

These topics will require

attention because Arab countries are concerned with putting an end to acts of terrorism in the Arab World, he said, adding that acts of terrorism contravene Islamic principles and values.

Dr. Salem noted that the council, which was formed in 1982, aims at promoting and strengthening inter-Arab relations in matters pertaining to internal security and combating crime.

Stating that Jordan has been giving due attention to combating terrorism, Dr. Salem added that the council has established an Arab League office on combating narcotics, which he said has been working very efficiently due largely to the skills of

the highly-qualified Jordanian members.

Mr. Rashid and Dr. Salem discussed issues connected with the Tunis meeting.

Dr. Salem also met with Nasouh Muhleddin, the director of the Public Security Department (PSD), who briefed him on the department's endeavours to fight crime.

Dr. Salem, who was taken on a tour of various PSD centres, called for closer cooperation among the security services in the Arab World.

He stressed that the council calls for strengthening relations among the concerned police forces to ensure security.

German delegation arrives Saturday to review regional developments

AMMAN (Petra) — A high-level German parliamentary delegation from Lower Saxony is due to arrive here on Nov. 22 for a one-week visit to study the latest developments in the Middle East political situation.

The nine-member delegation, representing the German Social Democratic Party, will meet officials to review Jordan's role in the peace process and to inspect the

Kingdom's progress in several fields, with special attention to the ongoing democratic process and the Nov. 4 general elections.

The delegation members are expected to meet ministers, deputies, and other officials, according to a Jordanian parliamentary statement, which added that the visit will be organised by Nazeh Musharbash, a German member of parliament.

Mr. Musharbash, who was originally a Jordanian citizen, said the visit aims at providing the German parliamentarians with an in-depth view of Jordan's social, economic, and political life.

Stating that the upcoming visit will further bolster bilateral relations, Mr. Musharbash said he hoped that a Jordanian parliamentary delegation will pay a reciprocal visit to Germany in the near future.

Anani returns from Doha conference

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani Wednesday returned home after heading the Jordanian delegation to the Middle East and North Africa

(MENA) economic conference, which concluded Tuesday in the Qatari capital of Doha.

At the closing session, Dr. Anani delivered His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's address, in which he called for liberalisation of

the Palestinian economy and an end to the Iraqi people's suffering from sanctions.

The Jordanian delegation comprised the ministers of planning, water and irrigation, industry, trade and supply and the governor of the Central Bank of Jordan.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

* German film "Ono Dix (1891-1996)" (in English with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Asfour) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

* "Daylight" at the American Center, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

FIFTH JORDANIAN THEATRE FESTIVAL

* Two plays entitled "The Wedding Night of Electra" and "The Last Tale of Shahrazad" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. respectively.

* Play entitled "Media" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Friday at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings by Saadi Al-Kasbi at Orient Gallery (Tel. 6813034), until Dec. 4.

* Exhibitions of prints by Algerian artist Rashid Koraishi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Mas'oudi at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh until Dec. 31.

* "Portrait '97" — works by over thirty Arab artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utthina, until

Nov. 30.

* Works by Khalid Khreis at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 10.

* Exhibition of wallhangings and weavings by Bashar Kathem and others at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Sagra Street (Tel. 6991312), until Dec. 4.

* Paintings by Bahija Al Hakim at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Nov. 22.

* "Journey Within" by Pakistani artist Gulgee and his son, sculptor Amin Gulgee, at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 630128), until Dec. 15.

* Paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31.

* Works by Syrian artist Khaled Al Maz at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Nov. 22.

* Bani Hamida fall exhibition "Encounter" (displaying rugs designed by Japanese textile designer Tomoko Iyoda) at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 25 (Tel. 6586967).

* Exhibition of wicker accessories from Wadi Rayan, handicrafts and gift items at the Jordan Rivers Designs showroom (Tel. 613081), until Nov. 23.

* Paintings by Patrice Cadennec at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 20.

Ministry closes school after residents beat up teacher

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri Wednesday ordered the South Shuneh Vocational Secondary School for Boys in the central Jordan Valley to close until further notice following the assault on a school teacher by town residents.

The teacher, whose name was withheld by the local authorities, had referred a student to the school administration for

improper conduct.

Instead of obeying, the student went home and gathered a group of relatives, friends, and other people from the local community, who went to the school, ransacked the administration office and the classrooms, and damaged and smashed school property, according to the minister.

The mob later attacked the teacher and beat him severely, causing injuries to the head and other parts

of his body, he said.

The teacher, who was taken to Al Hussein Hospital in Salt for treatment, was reported to have been discharged after receiving medical treatment.

The police are conducting an investigation into the case, according to ministry sources.

In his statement, the minister said "we have been accustomed to seeing local communities protect our educational institutions from attacks, but not

to seeing these communities fomenting attacks on these institutions and their personnel."

The attack on the teacher and the school in South Shuneh, he added, is totally unacceptable and an unprecedented incident that cannot be tolerated.

The Ministry of Education said the school will not be reopened until the whole issue has been settled and the police have completed their work.

Opposition request to hold march denied; sit-in planned for today

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government has denied a request by the opposition parties to hold a procession scheduled for today as a protest against threats by the U.S. to take military action against Iraq, according to a spokesman for the opposition parties Wednesday.

Fou'ad Dabour, secretary general of the Progressive Ba'ath Party, said the coalition has decided to hold a sit-in today, followed by a rally, at the Professional Associations Complex instead.

Mr. Dabour told the Jordan Times that no reason was given by Amman governor Tala'at Nawayseh for the prohibition on holding the procession, which was expected to begin at Al Hussein Mosque and end at Hashimiyeh Square.

Mr. Nawayseh confirmed that the procession was not authorised and said the decision to ban the procession was not based on "political and security reasons but was merely for technical reasons."

"The parties were planning to hold the procession

in the centre of Amman, which meant that it would have caused traffic jams and harmed commercial activities in the downtown. We will not allow such things to happen," Mr. Nawayseh said.

He told the Jordan Times that the opposition parties did not request permission to hold the sit-in today but stressed that the authorities will allow it to take place.

Mr. Dabour said representatives from several political movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood, will take part in the sit-in, as well as independent personalities.

He claimed that they obtained permission from Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali to hold their sit-in.

Mr. Dabour said the governor of Irbid, Qafan Majali, Tuesday refused to authorise a rally that was scheduled to take place in Irbid for the same reason.

He added that the governor demanded that each speaker present a "copy of his or her speech before granting them the licence to hold their rally."

Mr. Dabour said the rally was finally cancelled

because the participants declined to fulfil his request.

Among those who were expected to take part in the Irbid gathering were Laith Shbeilat, chairperson of the Jordan Engineers Association, Toujan Faisal, and Khalil Haddadin, a candidate who won a seat in the Nov. 4 parliamentary elections.

He said security agents Tuesday prevented Mr. Shbeilat from entering Irbid and forced him to leave for Amman.

A letter from Irbid's governor, which was made available to the Jordan Times, showed that Mr. Majali requested that the professional unions in Irbid produce the speeches "to study them."

The governor's message to the director of the Irbid police indicated that the reason behind the ban was to avoid creating "problems" between citizens in the northern governorate.

It did not specify what problems it would cause.

Meanwhile, an American aid group Wednesday said a team representing it will head to Baghdad to donate \$40,000 worth of medicine

to the Iraqi people.

Berni Sacks, a member of the Chicago-based Voices in the Wilderness (VW), said his group will leave for Baghdad Friday to donate medicine to hospitals in the Iraqi capital, the southern city of Basra, and Mosul in the north.

"Our efforts are nothing but a drop in the bucket...our efforts are not anti-American but pro-American and [are intended] to save the lives of Iraqi children."

He noted that United Nations reports indicated that at least 567,000 Iraqi children have died since the U.S.-spearheaded sanctions were imposed on Iraq.

"If I had to go to jail to end the sanctions I am ready for it," said Mr. Sacks, whose team has visited Baghdad several times for the same purpose.

"Voices in the Wilderness publicly sends delegations to Iraq in deliberate violation of U.S. law. By gathering and delivering critical medical supplies to Iraq, members risk 12 years in prison and \$1 million in fines," a statement from the group said.

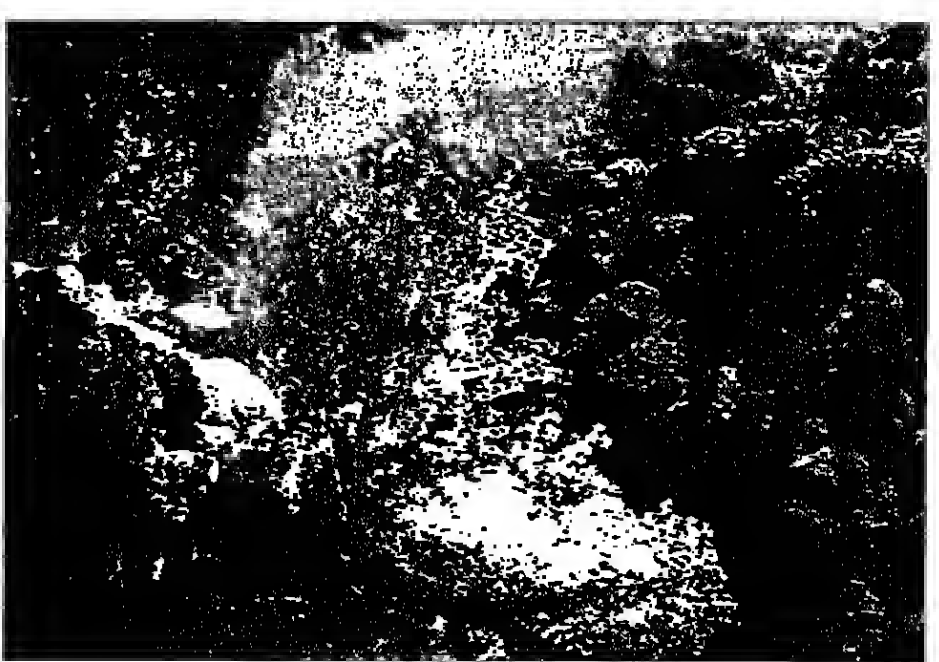
Minister opens environmental seminar in Aqaba

AQABA (Petra) — Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan Wednesday opened a seminar here entitled "The Problem of Marine Environment Pollution in Jordan" with a briefing on environmental protection projects by the concerned government organisations to combat pollution.

The Red Sea littoral countries, including Jordan, are implementing an agreement they have signed to carry out programmes and collaborate to keep the Red Sea clean, he said.

Dealing with environmental pollution to eliminate dangers resulting from exploitation of natural resources is a global concern, said the minister, adding that environmental problems constitute a real source of danger to mankind.

According to the deputy director of the General Institution for Environmental Protection, Jordan, like other countries, suffers from certain environ-



A view of the coral and sea life present in the Gulf of Aqaba (File photo)

mental problems resulting from urban expansion, economic growth, and industrial and agricultural development over the past two decades, all of which have caused real damage to natural resources and the environment.

He stated that the institution has opened a branch in Aqaba to promote the fight against marine pollution.

Approximately 100 participants in the seminar are scheduled to review working papers on the environment and develop-

ment in the Aqaba Gulf zone, combating marine pollution, the role of the Aqaba-based marine research science station in protecting the environment, and the role of the Royal Marine Units in protecting the coral reefs in the gulf.

Tourism ministers state Luxor massacre will not affect Jordanian, Israeli interests

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and Israel Wednesday said they did not expect that the terrorist attack in which 68 people were killed in Luxor, Egypt would have an adverse effect on their tourist industries.

News agencies quoted Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji as saying that there was "no fear on my side" of a backlash against tourism, because the incident was so "local, domestic, and

containable."

His Israeli counterpart, Moshe Katsav, said "what happened in Egypt is a domestic problem, not related to political problems in the region."

Both ministers were speaking at a joint press conference in London, where a world tourism exhibition is taking place.

The Jerusalem Post, meanwhile, reported that tourists who are afraid to go to Egypt will not go to

Israel instead.

According to Galilee Tours Director Moshe Hananel, who handles many of the tour groups, both Israeli and overseas, visiting Egypt and Jordan, the terror attack in Egypt is nothing but bad news for Israeli tourism, which is already in the doldrums.

"Many of those who had planned to visit Israel together with Egypt are already cancelling," Mr. Hananel told the Post yesterday.

He added that the combined tours had been especially popular with visitors who came from distant locales, such as North America and the Far East.

In Eilat, tourism officials fear that the Luxor massacre will cut tourism to Eilat and the Sinai, though they believe it will only be a short-term drop, according to the Post article.

Albright leaves India for U.N. meeting on Iraq

NEW DELHI (AFP) — United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright left here Wednesday and headed for Geneva to discuss the Iraqi crisis with other members of the U.N. Security Council, officials said.

Ms. Albright, who left at 4:45 p.m. (1115 GMT), is due to meet Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, France's Hubert Vedrine and British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook to discuss a Moscow-brokered proposal to end the stand-off.

The Iraqi crisis began last month when Baghdad announced it was expelling U.S. members on the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraqi disarmament.

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said the goal was to see

whether a meeting between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz Tuesday had found a solution allowing the arms inspectors to return.

He said if the discussions in Moscow "meet the requirements, then we will have achieved our objective."

The inspectors are charged with verifying that Iraq, which has been the subject of U.N. sanctions since 1990 following the Gulf war, disposes of its weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Rubin said their return to work should be "unconditional," adding: "We don't know whether that has yet been agreed to."

The Geneva meeting will take place very early Thursday, around 0200

GMT. Earlier reports said China, the other member of the Security Council, was also expected to be represented.

Ms. Albright, who spent much of Tuesday night on the telephone talking to her Russian, British and French counterparts, met Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral for around 90 minutes Wednesday.

She was also scheduled to have lunch with him before meeting the country's president and other Indian political leaders prior to her departure.

India earlier this week reiterated that it opposed any military action against Iraq.

The Iraq crisis has overshadowed much of Ms. Albright's tour of South Asia, due to pave the way for a South Asian visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton

early next year.

She had to delay her arrival in Pakistan after making a stop-over visit to the Gulf to try to drum up support for the U.S. stance on Iraq.

Ms. Albright was also forced to call off the Bangladesh leg of her tour later this week.

Media reports from Moscow Tuesday first suggested a meeting could be held in Geneva.

Mr. Primakov said "a plan has been worked out which, we think, will avert an armed confrontation and resolve this crisis," although he did not go into specifics.

But he said the plan included "Iraq complying with U.N. resolutions," adding: "At the same time the work of the (U.N.) Special Commission must continue."



U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright meets with Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral in New Delhi (Reuters photo)

Danish anti-immigrant party seen gaining

COPENHAGEN (R) — The right-wing Danish People's Party, which wants to restrict immigration, was making an impressive showing in early results in Danish local elections Tuesday, Ritzau news agency reported.

Early results showed the DPP, contesting its first election, winning between six and 10 per cent of all votes. A clear picture was not expected before 2300 GMT.

"We have had a fantastic result," party leader Pia Kjaersgaard said.

Earlier Tuesday she told Swedish Television: "I think people are frightened by the number of immigrants in Denmark. The people who vote for us want to send the immigrants back to where they came from."

Ritzau projections showed the Social Democrats maintaining their 35 per cent share, while the main opposition Liberal Party was steady around 25 per cent.

In the elections, four million Danes were eligible to vote for 17,700 candidates

running for some 5,000 posts in 275 local authorities and 14 county councils.

The DPP was formed after a breakaway from the ultra right-wing, anti-immigration Progress Party, which secured 4.3 per cent of the vote in the last local elections four years ago.

First results Tuesday night indicated that the DPP was winning votes mainly at the expense of the Progress party.

China defends right to use landmines as a 'necessity'

BEIJING (AFP) — China Wednesday defended its position against the global treaty banning landmines to be signed next month, saying the weapons "play an indispensable role" in its defences.

An editorial in the official China Daily acknowledged the massive civilian casualties caused each year by landmines left over from past conflicts and the growing international movement to ban them.

"However, the movement seemingly ignores the necessity of self-protection in many countries," it said.

"Landmines as an effective defensive weapon play an indispensable role for China, a developing country with a long boundary line," it said.

The editorial stressed that China's government has no use for mines except to safeguard the country against military invasion, adding that use within a country's own borders is a self-protection right guaranteed by the United Nations Charter.

Beijing ordered a permanent ban on exports of Chinese-made landmines in April last year, it said.

"China favours more restrictions on the use of landmines, sympathises with those countries suffering most from landmines and does its utmost to support international efforts," it said.

An international treaty banning the use, export, production, development and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines was negotiated in Oslo earlier this year and is due to be signed next month in Ottawa, Canada.

More than 100 countries have agreed to sign the treaty. Among those refusing to do so are China, Russia and the United States.

Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev last Friday said Moscow favoured signing the convention but would be unable to do so in the short term due to a lack of funds to destroy the country's vast stockpiles.

national efforts," it said.

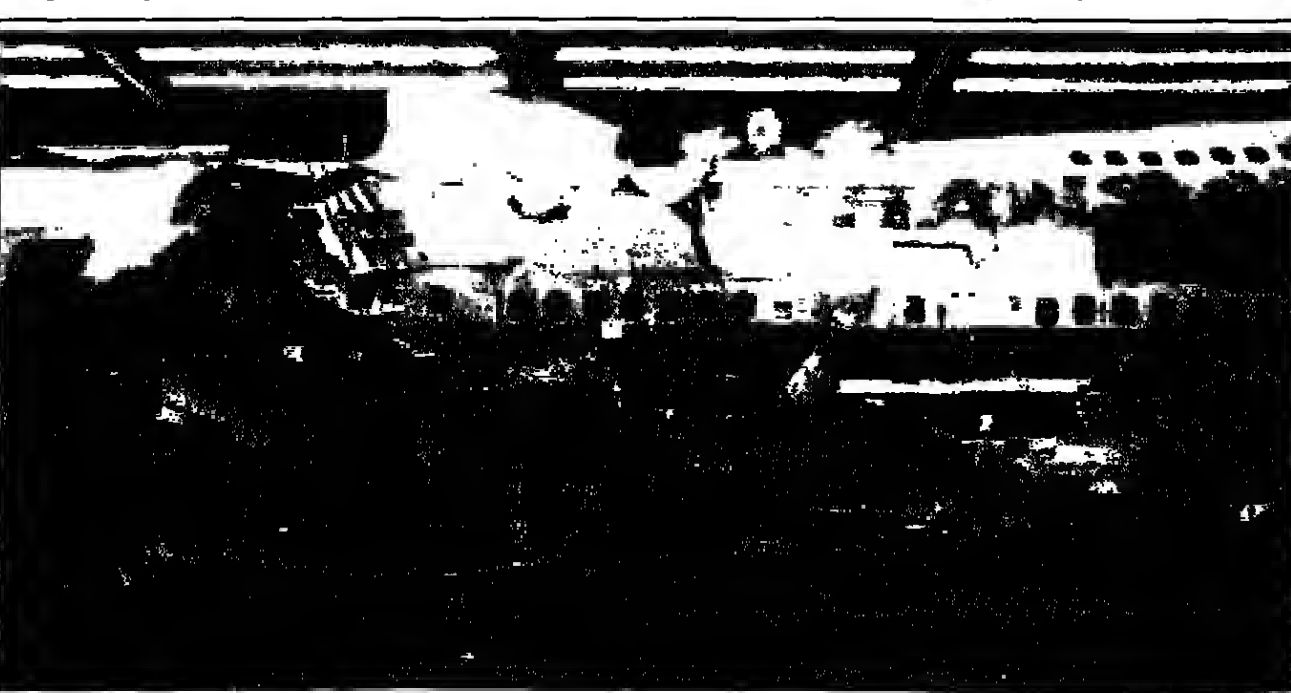
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The final work of the reconstructed TWA Flight 800 is shown at a hangar on Long Island, N.Y., in this April 1997 file photo (Reuters photo)

Families of TWA crash victims to meet after FBI ends probe

PARIS (AFP) — Families of victims of the July 1996 crash of a TWA flight near New York are to meet this weekend to discuss a decision by U.S. investigators to end their criminal probe into the crash that killed 230 people.

Laurent Jacquemot, vice-president of an asso-

ciation set up by the families, said the meeting Saturday would take place in the southern French town of Annonay and a press conference would be held afterwards.

Tuesday the FBI formally announced in New York that it was ending its criminal probe into the crash and had ruled out terror-

ism as a cause.

In a computer animation video, the CIA for its part explained that what 244 witnesses saw in the sky the night of July 17, 1996, was debris from the doomed, burning Boeing jet, not a missile as some of them thought.

According to the CIA, the aircraft broke apart

four seconds after an explosion in the central fuel tank.

The flaming cabin continued its ascent for several hundred metres before exploding 20 seconds later, before plunging into the Atlantic Ocean. Of the 230 people on board the TWA flight, 48 were French nationals.

Nigerian police arrest two senior editors

LAGOS (AFP) — Nigerian police have arrested the chief editors of a newspaper and two magazines days after the junta warned the press against derailing its plans to restore civilian rule, their publications said Wednesday.

Security forces detained Ndaka Obagbena, director and editor in chief of the independent newspaper This Day, and Babafemi Ojodu, chief editor of the independent weekly magazines The News and Tempo.

Mr. Ojodu was arrested Monday as he returned to Nigeria from a trip to Kenya, The News said.

Mr. Obagbena was arrested Friday as he arrived in the federal capital Abuja to cover ceremonies marking the fourth anniversary of General Sani Abacha's seizure of power, his paper said.

In a speech Monday marking that anniversary, Gen. Abacha warned the press against trying to "derail" the transition towards civilian rule. He

has vowed to hand over power to an elected civilian president in October of next year.

Mr. Obagbena's newspaper said his arrest apparently stems from a recent This Day article that criticised four senior government officials who are close to Abacha.

Nigeria's military junta has been cracking down on the independent media in the run-up to the regime's anniversary.

On Nov. 9, Onome Osifo-Whiskey, managing editor of Tell, a private weekly magazine, was seized on his way to church by suspected security agents.

Vehicles belonging to the magazine were towed away in what looked like an attempt to muzzle it.

A week earlier, Osifo-Whiskey had issued a statement voicing serious concerns for the safety of 22 of his staff, whom he said were on the hit list of an unidentified gang.

Tell's Editor-in-Chief Nosa Igboer is believed to have fled the country after

he became the target of a recent security sweep, in which his wife was briefly arrested.

The News' deputy editor, Jenkins Alumona, was arrested by state security agents on Nov. 8 as he left the studios of Nigerian state television where he had gone to present his weekly sports programme.

Two journalists on Tempo, a weekly tabloid in the same press group, were arrested but released last month.

Tell, The News and Tempo have all carried reports recently suggesting that Mr. Abacha's health had seriously deteriorated and vigorously opposing any plans for him to run for the presidency next year.

Soji Omonode, the editor of African Concord, a weekly magazine owned by detained opposition politician Chief Moshood Abiola, was abducted on Oct. 25.

The magazine's Abuja bureau chief, Mohammed Adamu, was arrested on July 27 and has not been released.

French aid worker and wife kidnapped in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE (AFP) — A French aid worker and his wife in Tajikistan have been kidnapped from their home in the capital Dushanbe, a Tajik Interior Ministry source said Wednesday.

Franck Janier-Dubry, 27, and his wife Karine were apparently taken away late Tuesday in their car, which was found abandoned three kilometres away.

Their present whereabouts and the identity of their kidnappers were unknown.

Janier-Dubry had been working for 18 months with a European Union aid programme called TACIS, which gives expert advice to former Soviet republics trying to undertake economic reforms and develop a market economy.

An official at the TACIS office here said there had so far been no contact with the kidnappers.

The ITAR-TASS news agency quoted a representative of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Tajikistan as saying there had been reports recently that staff of international organisations might be kidnapped.

In February, a Tajik warlord, Bakhtom Sadirov, kidnapped a number of United Nations and UNHCR workers, releasing them unharmed only after intense negotiations.

Mr. Sadirov, who is now in jail, was seeking to obtain weapons and the movement from Afghanistan to Tajikistan of his brother Rizvon and some 40 supporters.

A security force official quoted by Interfax put the blame for the latest kidnapping on one of the many armed gangs active in Tajikistan.

The country suffered five years of bloody guerrilla war before a peace deal was signed in June between President Emonali Rakhmonov and the pro-Islamic opposition.

The deal provided for an exchange of prisoners, the formation of a coalition government and the absorption of opposition guerrillas into the regular army.

But a number of attacks have taken place recently with the apparent aim of derailing the agreement.

The kidnapping came just two days after four Frenchmen were released after being held for more than three months in Chechnya following their abduction in the neighbouring Russian republic of Dagestan.

Pakistani PM formally charged with contempt

ISLAMABAD (R) — Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was formally charged with contempt of court Wednesday in an increasingly bitter showdown between the government and judiciary.

The charges were made when Mr. Sharif, in power for nine months, made a second personal appearance at the Supreme Court to respond to allegations that remarks he made this month showed contempt of the nation's top legal institution.

Mr. Sharif said the court acted illegally this month when it suspended a constitutional amendment banning members of parliament from switching political party allegiance.

Eight other members of parliament and three newspapers were served with similar indictments in a showdown the opposition says is snarling the nation in a major constitutional crisis.

The army chief of staff, General Jehangir Karamat, was reported by local media to be returning from a visit to London to discuss the crisis. No other details were available.

Behind the scenes, Mr. Sharif's Muslim League party, which has a commanding parliamentary majority, was working on legislation to amend the

constitution to limit the judiciary's power.

Mr. Sharif's cabinet met early in the day to discuss the amendments, which were reported to include a clause allowing parliament to summon a judge for contempt.

Both houses of parliament have approved a hastily-drafted bill allowing Mr. Sharif to appeal if he is found guilty of contempt. The bill now needs the assent of President Farooq Leghari.

It was rushed through parliament hours after Mr. Sharif made an unprecedented personal appearance before the Supreme Court Monday, when he pledged respect for the judiciary but made no apology for the remarks the court deemed contemptuous.

The uncertainty has unnerved the Karachi stock market. Dealers fear the crisis could bring the government down nine months after it swept to power promising to be pro-business, a supporter of privatisation and enemy of government waste.

The Karachi KSE-100 index, which dropped below the 1,700 mark at the opening, climbed back above that level in early trade, though trading was nervous.

"Sentiment is weak due

to a rift between the judiciary and government. But short-covering in select blue chips offset early losses, dealer Dawar Hasan said.

Mr. Sharif's showdown with the judiciary began with a trial of strength over whether Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Khan or Mr. Sharif had the final word in appointing top judges.

Mr. Sharif reluctantly backed down, saying the row was distracting his government from rebuilding the economy. He was arraigned for contempt the following day.

Mr. Sharif, an industrialist, has had a chequered political career. He was elected in 1990 but was dismissed by a former president in 1993, restored by the supreme court then manoeuvred into resigning.

He returned last year with an overwhelming majority after former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was sacked by Mr. Leghari on charges of corruption.

In its 50 years since independence from Britain after the partition of India, Pakistan's politics have been marked by periods of martial law and attempts to fix the boundaries between the government, courts, president and army.

No government in recent years has run a full term.

400 more illegal immigrants arrive in Italy

REGGIO CALABRIA (AFP) — About 400 illegal immigrants arrived in southern Italy, port authorities said Tuesday, bringing the total number of such arrivals since the start of the month to 1,400.

The latest arrivals, most of them women and children, were of African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin.

They were taken to a reception centre at a port in Reggio Calabria.

Most of them have been taken to a reception centre at a port in Reggio Calabria.

Russian deputies to vote on ousting Chubais

MOSCOW (R) — Russian legislators were expected to step up pressure on Russian President Boris Yeltsin Wednesday by voting on a non-binding resolution asking him to remove top reformer Anatoly Chubais from the government.

Many deputies in the opposition-led state Duma, lower house of parliament, have long hated Mr. Chubais, the first deputy prime minister who leads the country's economic reform policies.

But a scandal over fees Mr. Chubais and a number of his top allies received to write a weighty tome on privatisation have given his opponents new ammunition to seek his ouster.

The Kremlin Tuesday said it would not give into Communist-led demands to force Mr. Yeltsin to dump Mr. Chubais.

"I'd like to give some advice to the most radical part of the opposition," spokesman Sergei Yastrebinskiy told a briefing. "Remember, it is hopeless to talk to the president of the Russian Federation in terms of ultimatums and demands."

Yet even before Mr. Yeltsin's spokesman took the sharp line against Mr. Chubais's opponents, the opposition had changed tack.

The Communists, the biggest grouping in the state Duma, had said Monday they would not even discuss the draft 1998 budget while Mr. Chubais, 42, remained in the posts of first deputy prime minister and finance minister.

They softened their stance Tuesday and agreed to look into the bill Friday. They appeared to accept it would not be Mr. Chubais but first deputy Finance Minister Vladimir Petrov who would represent the cabinet in the debate.

Mr. Chubais barely survived a scandal last week over the \$450,000 he and several allies had received for an as yet unpublished book. Mr. Yeltsin sacked three co-authors — like Mr. Chubais, all former privatisation ministers — from power but kept Mr. Chubais after rebuking him publicly.

Sacked were Privatisation Minister Maxim Boiko, head of the Federal Bankruptcy Agency Pyotr Mostovoi and Deputy Head of the Kremlin Administration Alexander Kazakov.

Russian news agencies said prosecutors questioned Mr. Mostovoi over the book deal and wanted to speak to Mr. Kazakov but he was taken to a hospital Tuesday with heart problems.

Mr. Yeltsin Tuesday temporarily replaced Mr. Boiko and Mr. Kazakov with their first deputies, but it was clear permanent replacements had not yet been found.

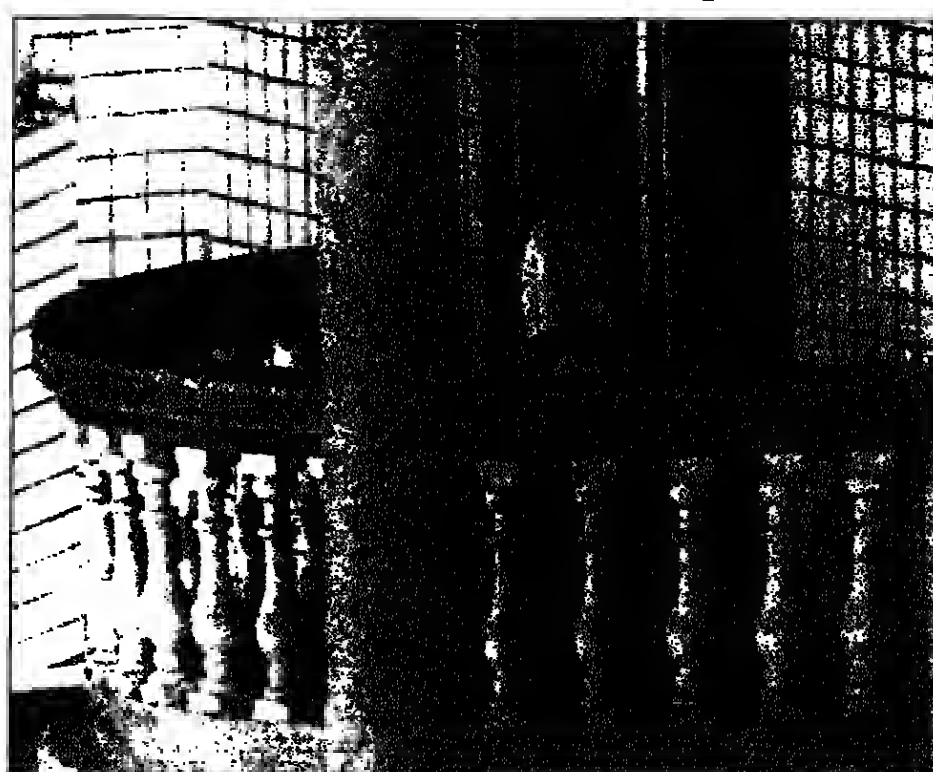
The Duma is likely to pass the non-binding document urging Mr. Yeltsin to accept the offer by Mr. Chubais to resign, but the real test of the deputies' mood will be Thursday when they are due to look into three important draft tax laws sought by the government to form a basis for the budget.

Valentin Kuptsov, number two in the Communist Party, told reporters that during the Friday budget debate his faction would take part in discussion but refuse to vote if Mr. Chubais was not sacked by then.

Last month the Communists initiated a no-confidence motion in the government, where Mr. Chubais and fellow reformist First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov appeared to set the tune under veteran Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

But they dropped the motion after Mr. Yeltsin first reminded them of his vast constitutional powers which include the right to dissolve the chamber and then offered some token concessions.

Taiwan's hostage taker surrenders



The 12-year-old daughter of South African diplomat Mac Alexander looks out the window of her Taipei home while being held hostage by Taiwan's most wanted murderer suspect Chen Chin-Hsin (Reuters photo)

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwan's most-wanted fugitive Wednesday surrendered to police and turned in all his weapons ending a 24-hour hostage drama involving the family of a South African diplomat, witnesses said.

Earlier he had freed the 12-year-old daughter of South African diplomat E.G. "Mac" Alexander, who said that the gunman had shot her father "accidentally."

Christine Alexander was the second person released by Chen Chin-Hsin from the diplomat's residence which was surrounded by hundreds of police.

Christine wiped away tears after hugging friends waiting outside her home before being driven away, witnesses said.

"He (Chen) was nice to me, he didn't want to hurt me. By accident, he shot my dad and my sister, but he didn't want to," Christine told reporters.

Christine immediately went to the Veterans General Hospital to see her father and sister who were wounded in the hostage drama which erupted Tuesday night.

Mr. Chen was negotiating with police and prosecutors over conditions for the release of the last hostage, Mr. Alexander's wife Anne.

Earlier Wednesday, Mr. Chen had freed a seven-month-old boy named Zachary whom Mr. Alexander's secretary said was being taken care of by the family before adoption. The baby was earlier identified as Mr. Alexander's son.

Mr. Chen hunkered into the diplomat's home in the Taipei suburb of Beitou Tuesday night. He shot Mr. Alexander and his 22-year-old daughter Melanie, who were released and taken to hospital.

Botha wanted by S. African truth body

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — South Africa's former President Pieter Botha, an architect of apartheid rule, must appear before the country's truth panel as an ordinary citizen, a commission chief said Wednesday.

The deputy chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission founded to probe crimes during the decades of white minority rule and the struggle against it, stated that "Mr. Botha is an ordinary South African citizen who has a lot to tell the commission."

Speaking on SABC Radio, TRC Deputy Chief Alex Boraine recalled Mr. Botha's key role in power. The elderly ex-leader has refused to appear before the panel, which is headed by Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former Archbishop Desmond Tutu as a

cathartic exercise in shedding light on the dark years of racial segregation and the repression of the black majority.

The TRC was expected Wednesday again to call on him to testify next month.

"Bear in mind the long years when he was in charge of apartheid," Mr. Boraine said. "He has information. He has to answer like anyone else."

"I mean Mr. Mbeki came before us, Mr. De Klerk came before us, next week Mrs. Mdlizela-Mandela comes before us. Not out of revenge but as an attempt to do our job," Mr. Boraine was referring to post-apartheid Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, the last white minority ruler Frederick de Klerk and the divorced wife of President Nelson Mandela.

dela.

At the weekend, Mr. Botha's lawyers said the 81-year-old ex-leader was too ill to appear before the commission — which has been empowered to grant amnesty for a range of political crimes — but Mr. Boraine countered: "When his lawyers told us that he wasn't well, we accepted that and then we set new dates. We told his lawyers that we would want him to come in December."

Mr. Boraine used the Afrikaans-language press to describe the TRC as a "circus" and challenge its summons.

Mr. Boraine said the commission would use the law to compel Mr. Botha to give evidence, while a TRC spokesman said that a summons would be issued Wednesday to have him appear on Dec. 5 during

ing a hearing concerning the apartheid regime's state security council, which included cabinet ministers and army, police and intelligence chiefs.

Former Defence Minister Magnus Malan and the ex-chief of the National Intelligence Service, Neil Barnard, are also due to appear in December.

The parliamentary act founding the commission enables it to fine those who disobey a subpoena or jail them for two years. Mr. Boraine said that regarding Mr. Botha, the body had been "very, very reasonable and I think we now have to go according to the act."

"And I think whilst a lot of South Africans may have a sneaking admiration for, as it were, the old man sort of daring to defy this commission, a lot of people feel it's just simply

not right that he should be excluded and so many others have had to face the commission, like the captains of industry, all of them have come," he added.

The TRC first postponed a summons to Mr. Botha in September, after he was widowed in June and was recuperating from a hip operation, but the ex-leader Tuesday confirmed that he had become engaged to a long-standing friend, Reineke Te Water Naude.

Mr. Boraine took note of the public response. "I think the fact that they see him fairly robust in health, he says to the media he is fine, he is walking with a stick, ... and that he is entering into a new relationship, I suppose that does put pressure on us," he said.

French journalist testifies against Rwandan accused of war crimes

ARUSHA. — Tanzania (AFP) — A French journalist has testified against the former prefect of Kibuye, Rwanda, accused of ordering the massacre of thousands of Tutsis, Radio Agatashya, reported Wednesday.

Patrick de Saint-Exupéry, a journalist with the French daily Le Figaro, told the U.N. War-crimes Tribunal for Rwanda Tuesday that an aide to Clement Kayishema had reported to him that the

former prefect ordered the massacre to take place before the late June 1994 arrival of French troops in Rwanda.

"We have to clean it all up before the arrival of the French," Mr. Kayishema was reported to have said.

France sent troops to Rwanda at the end of June 1994, three months after a previously French-backed government launched a plan to kill hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Tutsis and some moderate

Hutus.

The troops arrived and set up a so-called safe zone in southwest Rwanda as a Tutsi-led intervention force seized control of Kigali, the Rwandan capital, effectively ending the genocide.

Mr. Kayishema, a former trader, Obed Ruzindana, are jointly accused of genocide and crimes against humanity for their alleged role in the killings.

Sierra Leone junta says coup plot foiled

FREETOWN (AFP) — The military junta in Sierra Leone Wednesday stated that it had foiled a coup plot which could have had "catastrophic consequences" after announcing the arrests of two key suspects Sunday.

"The two men are being held on suspicion of being involved in a coup plot," junta Secretary-General Colonel Abdul Sesay said in a first official reaction to the arrests of Steve Bio, brother of a former military leader, and Gibril Massaquoi, spokesman of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group now allied with the junta.

Col. Sesay declined to elaborate, saying investigations were under way. Some 15 people have been detained in connection with the plot, intelligence sources told AFP.

"It had a tribal origin and would have been catastrophic if it had taken place," one source said.

Other sources suggested the detained men wanted to dislodge the RUF, now called the People's Army, from disarming as agreed in an accord signed on Oct. 23 in Guinea's capital Conakry. That pact also provided for the junta to restore civilian rule next April.

Sources close to the investigation disclosed that Mr. Bio and Mr. Massaquoi were arrested in the eastern city of Kenema by RUF deputy leader Colonel Sam Bockari and RUF Lieutenant-Colonel Issa Sesay. "Both were trying to persuade a group of RUF fighters to ignore the coming disarmament programme," stated to begin on Dec. 1, said one source.

Mr. Bio, an alleged arms dealer, reportedly tried a week ago to discuss the plan

with Bockari and RUF fighters on the ground, telling them the plot had been mandated by RUF founding leader Foday Sankoh, who is detained somewhere in Nigeria.

"It was at this point Bio and Massaquoi were arrested," the sources added. In a related development, the head of the Western Area Security Patrol (WASP) law enforcement agency, blamed a dramatic rise in violent crime in the capital Freetown on "counter-revolutionaries."

"Anyone who challenges WASP at night and is caught will be executed whether he is an armed robber, a counter-revolutionary or Father Christmas," Captain Mandereh Kamara said, the night after his forces fought pitched battles with heavily armed men in various parts of the city.

In the west of Freetown Tuesday night, residents were woken by sustained gunfire. The battle led to the

capture of some seven armed robbers wearing military uniforms while about six got away, WASP agents said.

In the east of the city, about 120 robbers were nabbed after an exchange of gunshots and their truck was seized.

"A new type of criminal seems to have surfaced in the capital over the past few days," Mr. Kamara told AFP. "These new class of criminals are standing their ground to fire at us until they realise the battle is lost before they try to escape," he added.

He said he suspected that the groups, which include women, "are representing certain factions within or outside Sierra Leone who are opposed to the military government and want to bring it down." "We have devised new strategies to outwit them," he said. "I have spent three days without sleep just to make sure we are on top of the situation," he added.

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With slogans left behind

PEOPLE. CERTAINLY here in Jordan and also in Israel, are pinning hope on the outcome of the meeting that was held between His Majesty King Hussein and the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, near London on Tuesday night. But while it is premature to gauge the effect of the meeting on Netanyahu's future policies, it is fair to say that the man should show much more appreciation for the fact that Jordan is one of very few countries that have not given up hope on the Israeli government's commitments to the peace accords under his leadership.

No politician would want to be in Netanyahu's shoes nowadays. This past week saw him snubbed by President Bill Clinton, scolded by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, censured by Arab leaders, those present, and not present at the Doha conference, and plotted against by his own Likud Party back at home.

His own president, Ezer Weizman, used the 20th anniversary of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977 to urge Netanyahu to be as brave as the Egyptian leader and seize the moment presented by "historical currents" that Sadat and Menachem Begin grasped 20 years ago and used to conclude peace between their two countries.

"A large part of the (Israeli) public was convinced that if a person such as (Begin) were to come to power he would take us back to the cycle of war," President Weizman said in an article published in the Jerusalem Post on Wednesday.

It was Netanyahu who used a slogan in his election campaign last year to convince the Israeli electorate that he, like Begin before him, is the man to deliver peace. Unfortunately, he has not delivered on those words. Today the Israelis enjoy neither security nor peace.

Peace between Arabs and Israelis is as remote today as it was 20 years ago, thanks to the policies that this Israeli government has pursued since it came to power 18 months ago. Egypt, the first country to sign a peace treaty with Israel, has been alienated by those policies. The few Arab countries that established some form of diplomatic relations with the Jewish state have for some time now practically frozen ties. Even Morocco boycotted Doha. And relations with Jordan, which Netanyahu was able to strain to the limit in September by the attempt on Khaled Misha'al's life, are still to be restored to their normal level, not because of unwillingness on the part of the Jordanian leadership but due to the fact that Netanyahu had not been genuine in respecting his pledges and promises.

It is really up to the prime minister now to live up to his and his country's commitment to peace and to fulfill the many promises he had made to the King and to presidents Clinton, Mubarak and Arafat. We wish that the lessons from last week will help soften, not harden anew, Netanyahu's hitherto obstinate stands. In the words of President Weizman we "hope that the currents of history are stronger than anything else and that we will overcome the crises and succeed in achieving arrangements that will ensure for us and our children a secure and true peace in the Middle East."

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Taher Adwan blasted those behind the attack and murder of tourists in Egypt as calling them criminals bent on harming humanity. The "terrorists" who commit their crimes in the name of Islam are in fact enemies of the Islamic faith and allies of the devil, they are evil elements of groups that have been bragging about the creation of an Islamic state but in reality applying the rule of the jungle on mankind, said the writer. These groups who have sold themselves to the devil are playing into the hands of Israel and other enemies of Islam at a time when the Arab World is confronting the onslaught of U.S.-Zionist domination. Adwan said. The direct victim of this terrorist attack in Luxor is Egypt's economy which relies on tourism for most of its income. The attack aims at tarnishing the image of the Muslim people and their faith, he added. By employing the term "Islam" in carrying out their crimes, the perpetrators of the massacre in Luxor cannot fool the Arab masses, particularly the Egyptian people, and they cannot, through such criminal acts, convince the world of their ideas or their cause.

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit in Doha yielded benefits for Jordan's economy. According to Dr. Fanek, the agreement signed by Jordan, Israel and the U.S. on the creation of a free industrial zone near Irbid has been a long-sought-for project. Jordan has for a long time wanted its goods to be marketed freely in America, he said. Noting that both Israel and the Palestine self-rule areas had already won Washington's approval for marketing their products free of customs charges in the U.S. as a dividend of peace, the writer said Jordan, for the same reason, deserves to be accorded similar treatment and given the same rights. Dr. Fanek stressed that the Irbid industrial zone can produce products by joint Jordanian-Israeli businesses, bear a "made in Jordan" label and find their way without any obstacles to the U.S. markets earning the country badly needed hard currency. With this agreement, the writer said, new jobs will be created and more money will be invested in joint industries that can bolster the Kingdom's economy and solve many of its socio-economic problems.

View from Academia

High time we address violence, terrorism

TRAGIC ACTS of terror, such as the one committed in Luxor on Monday and the ongoing carnage in Algeria, have become a major problem, if not a plague, to many countries in our own region and elsewhere in the world. As such acts are different — in motive, strategy and target, among other things — from what humanity has been used to, say traditional wars, we (individuals of influence, concerned non-governmental organisations as well as governments involved and governments of goodwill) need to understand better how to deal with this growing problem.

What is more troubling is that such acts are aimed at innocent, unsuspecting, and unprepared civilians. If you go to war as a warrior, you know what to expect; if you, as a civilian, happen to find yourself living (or having to live) in a war situation, you know what to expect, and you do your best to guard against danger. If you are a victim of terror, you are most helpless because danger comes when least expected.

It is a bitter paradox and an irony that the jubilant site of a glamorous performance (of Verdi's opera Aida, which was staged in Luxor only last month) becomes the site of mass murder and death. Tourists spend their life's savings

on a break from the routine of work and life's hardships to get a look at the world and reap some enjoyment; a death blow comes out of nowhere. This is tragically unfair. And it is sickening.

What can one do?

Sympathy with the victims, condemnation of the victimisers, anger and frustration — while inevitable and necessary — do not help much, ultimately. What is required is a more effective series of acts which culminate in eradicating this problem.

I like the term the United Nations uses in connection with tackling the problem of poverty ("eradication" of poverty), and I wish the term could also be applied to terror. The civilised countries of today's world, especially those in our region, should put their heads together with the aim not just of "fighting" terror, but "eradicating" it, putting a total end to it, once and for all.

For this purpose (important, essential, and urgent), the causes of terror themselves need to be studied sincerely, objectively, and courageously. For unless we get to the bottom of the problem (i.e., identify the causes) we will be at best treating symptoms which may delay the problem or slow its momentum but never eradicate it entirely.

And such studies ought to be conducted by professional scholars and experts who do not belong to this or that country or political grouping, by neutral countries whose objectivity is known to all, or by independent, specialised international or U.N. organisations.

To this end, a series of regional conferences needs to be held. It would probably be a mistake to view terror in all parts of the world as one and the same in its aims, strategies, causes and targets. It is much better, perhaps, to treat terror at the level of individual, separate regions — for regions differ in the calibre and nature of problems and causes which stand behind terror.

The Middle East and North Africa (or shall I say, rather, the Middle East or North Africa) can benefit from a conference devoted exclusively to the study and eradication of terror. Not a conference which is more symbolic than anything else but one of the calibre of the MENA economic conferences.

Where there is a will, there is a way. The matter is urgent, and I'm sure that if we Middle Easterners study and address the causes of terror sincerely and effectively, we can rid ourselves of a plague from which many of us have long suffered.



IMF, debt crisis and African economies

By John Gay Joh

ONE NEEDS no PhD in economics to observe the continual decline of African economies in the 1990s. There is no doubt that the overall wealth of that continent, with double the population of the United States, is little more than that of Belgium. It is unfortunate to say that the arguments which one hears from the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) defectors are consistent both in essence and content. Most of these people are bureaucrats and civil servants of international institutions and of bilateral forums who pay visits to these countries. Once there, they meet ministers and government officials and go back to Washington, D.C. fully assured that the SAP system is working. The old tale is thus reported as usual: "The growth rate is three per cent, before SAP it was negative. The budget deficit has been reduced by 10 per cent, the rate of inflation has been halved from 100 to 50 per cent..." etc.

The big problem in International Monetary Fund-African relations is that African leaders do not know that there are no permanent friends or permanent attitudes in international relations. Indeed, for many African economists, the Western powers' goal is not and never was to feed today's undernourished or starving millions, but to perpetuate poverty and dependency for all together "valid" political and economic reasons. The Western methods of development have not produced, so far, a single independent and viable economy in Africa. Development has been, at its best, a code name for imposing a new kind of dependency for enriching the already rich world, and for shaping the other societies to meet its commercial needs. Thus, to achieve that, the West must control the international economy.

The 1960s was a period of post-independence boney-moon in Africa with Briton Woods institutions. As a

matter of fact, in the 1960s Ghanaians were more well-off economically than Koreans, while Sierra Leoneans were less poor than Indonesians. The 1970s was the time a number of commodity agreements were signed with Africa, which believed then, that financial security was at the corner. In the 1980s the African economy was squeezed, and the Western financial institutions earned windfall profits from these poor countries. So many developmental contracts and financial concessions were given to Western companies. The 1990s is supposed to be the era of "financial success," but indeed most African economies collapsed.

SAP was sold to African leaders under the seductive, but false French slogan "Il n'y a pas d'alternative" — there is no alternative. The IMF condition chart composed of 111 conditions including: that governments should spend within their limitations, they should free up prices, reduce or remove subsidies, stop meddling in business and sell off unprofitable state enterprises, and keep their exchange rates competitive. Many countries in the region complied with these conditions and put them to test. What was the result? All the gains of 35 years of independence were wiped out. The truth is that African economies are too vulnerable to withstand such demanding reforms as presented by the World Bank and the IMF. The high interest rates required to meet short-term IMF monetary targets, coupled of course with the removal of import protection, would actually choke the small industries Africa needs to develop.

Indeed, the middle class professionals in the continent are now living in miserable poverty. Unemployment, crime, misery and poverty enveloped the African societies. Struggle for power became the only political and social centre of contact among tribes. The same Western companies which caused all

this mess, are today accusing the African leaders of corruption and inability, suffocated the weak economies of their countries with a nonsensical regulatory regime of permits and licences guaranteed only to stifle farmers and businessmen, while lining the pockets of bureaucrats who handed them out. What these IMF officials should add is that most of these, if not all the permits, have actually been awarded, since the independence, to foreign investors, who, because they possessed excessive capitals, could afford handsome bribes to these bureaucrats. In other words, it was the policies which the IMF dictated and forced on African leaders that generated and nursed the current state of corruption.

What about the GATT agreement of December 1993? What can Africa gain from it? Reading the tariff and trade agreement carefully, there is no way it can benefit Africa. While the GATT accord will provide the Europeans with a gain of \$61.3 billion a year, the U.S. \$36.4 billion and Japan \$27 billion. Africa will lose \$2.66 billion a year. (Source/GATT: Who will win what? OECD, 1993).

What can be done to make things right? Both the creditors and debtors should take decisive action which must entail the gradual writing down of the debt. Commercial bonds must offer a guarantee of their future loans which is conditional on their writing off a certain amount of debt over a specific period. To help Africa, this plan of action must also include substantial input of fresh resources in the form of aid and investment, and a workable plan should be drawn by Africans to extract their natural resources which are currently resting under the ground.

The writer is an associate researcher at the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies in Amman. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

LETTERS

A minor majority?

To the Editor:

WOMEN, WHO make up about half of Jordan's population, and naturally half the world's population, are a significant part of every society. So, why should they be ignored? Many might say that they are not, but are these people right? Do women in Jordan have the same rights as men? This was the question that was posed by many, after the results of the parliamentary elections.

The puzzling thing about those results was that not a single seat was won by a woman! It might have been just a coincidence, but why? Do Jordanians view women as unfit to hold seats in the parliament? Is the only place for a Jordanian woman in the home? Doesn't any woman deserve more than that? If we are told that a woman shares equal rights with a man, shouldn't she be seen as his equal?

After the elections, people started wondering, is this right? Do we live in a man's world? Will men always dominate? Since we live in a democratic

country, men should start accepting women as their equals. Women should feel more freedom and a sense of belonging, giving them courage to vote for other women. Women should hold more seats in the parliament. For only a woman can represent other women presenting their needs and what they lack. Women should have representatives in the parliament. Not viewing one woman's success as an achievement, but having half of the parliament, like half of the society made up of females, should be the electorate's target. Other countries have made it that far, we think Jordan should be the next on the list.

Is the only solution for this ordeal having a minority seat for women in the parliament? We think it's a start at least. A start for making Jordan and its Parliament better. A start for allowing everyone to be truly heard.

Hana Habayeh
Mariam Abo Hijith
Salwa Katkhoda
Amman

Raising 'uncertainties'

To the Editor:

WHILE WE, as all who are concerned with the heritage of Jordan, applaud the increased attention being given to the presentation of archaeological sites and the information being given to the visitor, we feel that a certain note of caution must be sounded. In prominent sites such as the Amman Citadel, the reconstruction of the Umayyad Reception Hall with a domed roof can give an impression certainly of the original structure's form where historical and scholarly debate exists.

The Reception Hall, with its amazingly rich carved stone decoration in the Sasanian tradition and yet familiar cruciform plan, which is mirrored elsewhere in the Byzantine world, shows clearly the blend of two traditions which forms Umayyad architecture. The existence of a dome over the central space is the subject of some controversy. There is no architectural evidence for the existence of a stone dome: some scholars have conjectured

that there was a light wooden superstructure — as is now seen. However, at least one scholar who studied Umayyad Amman in detail (Dr. Alistair Northedge: Sorbonne University, Paris) has concluded that "the centre of the building was likely to have been an open court." Such an open building would not have been out of place in the Sasanian world: There are close parallels in Samarra, Iraq.

While such debate may seem to be the stuff of esoteric scholarship, we feel that the visitor has a right to know uncertainties surrounding with fundamental issues concerned with cultural influences. The very fine interpretation panels which have been erected on the Citadel could refer to this debate and thereby reflect the conjecture which exists in all reconstructions of the past.

Alison McQuitty
Madeleine Sarley
Amman

Not meant for a G audience

To the Editor:

RECENTLY, MY husband and I decided to enjoy an afternoon movie with our 5-year-old son, an enjoyable outing filled with laughter was all we were after. What else would we expect from the antics of Mr. Bean!! After settling into our seats the lights were dimmed and the nightmare began. The half-hour-long preview show was filled with the most violent and bloody excerpts from upcoming films. I was appalled and had to rush my son out of the theatre and complain until the management finally cut the preview show. I realise that these violent films are produced in the country of my birth, but in the United States one chooses the film that she and her child should view based on a rating system, and such previews would never be run during a

G (general audience) rated film. However, the damage is done for my son and many children who were present at the theatre. If the government can pay someone to censor Glamour and Vogue magazines with a black magic marker, shouldn't someone be responsible for the vivid pictures that might harm a child forever?

A mere footnote:
How can the management of the movie theatre lock the emergency exit?

If ever a fire were to erupt, the polyester filled theatre would be burned to the ground along with all of the patrons.... Simply irresponsible management that should not be allowed under any circumstance....

Amy Quinlan
Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

This week

Health must be considered at every stage of development planning — Crown Prince

Following is the full text of the address by HRH Crown Prince Hassan to the Second International Conference for Medical and Surgical Dermatology and The Laser which concluded Wednesday. The speech was delivered on the Crown Prince's behalf by HRH Princess Sumaya.

social and economic opportunities for all, and the progressive reduction of poverty.

Health is defined as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity." One's state of health is not only related to the better application of medical sciences, but it entails a larger look at the individual's socio-economic and cultural circumstances. Consequently, it is most essential to concentrate on the weakest and most vulnerable groups in our society, by way of education.

Because health is essentially linked to comprehensive sectoral development, it must be considered therefore at every stage of development planning. During the past three decades, Jordan, under the wise leadership of His Majesty King Hussein has succeeded in building a highly sophisticated system of health care, which provides its population with the best possible medical services: training highly-qualified professionals and building facilities for all levels of care. Infant mortality rate has fallen drastically. Life expectancy has improved with the percentage of vaccinated children on the increase.

We in Jordan must continue with the development of our health programmes and aspire to the highest standard of care for all our people, by focusing on prevention, control and research. Prevention is the first and most important phase in the health process. It encompasses various factors such as mother and child care, immunisation, health education, and above all, a safe and clean environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As in all other sciences, excellence in the field of health should always be our final goal — excellence in ideas, perfection in planning and performance. Your work in this conference should set the example of such excellence by stressing objective methods of research and integrity in planning for regional health issues and programmes.

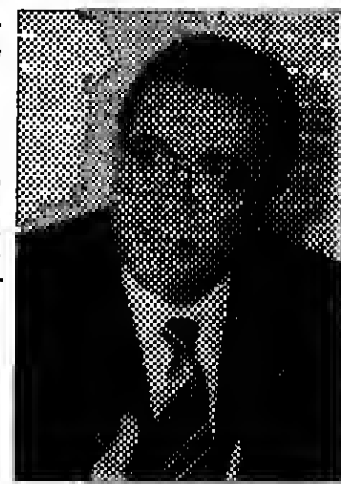
The continuity of your efforts in these conferences is nothing short of an illustration of the deep spirit of cooperation pervading all parts of the Arab World. It is our belief and resolve that integration of all our efforts is the only way to progress and prosperity. We hope that such conferences will strengthen scientific cooperation within the Arab region, and encourage exchange and collaborative research efforts with scientists from all over the world.

Dermatological and plastic surgeons using "high-tech" methods are committed to quality medical care and ethical standards. The promotion of public awareness of dangerous environmental factors is a vital responsibility of all of us here today.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that we must not let the difficulties of our time hamper our course. The obstacles and challenges we face are great, but our ambitions and capabilities are equally as great. All we have to do is exert our best efforts in this cause. And again, to quote Bradford Tait, "Our health and the health of future generations is a development imperative and a moral obligation."

Society on the move Doctors in the spotlight

Of the various posts, vocations or otherwise, being considered for a replacement, the one the government has decided to fill was that of director of the Agaba Regional Authority.



Marwan Dudin

Dr. Dudin, 60, who retired in 1989 but has been Jordan's chief negotiator for refugees to the bilateral and multilateral peace talks, and served in the nation's cabinets as minister of information, occupied territories, agriculture, and labour. He also served as ambassador to Romania and was head of the cooperatives as well as head of the Agricultural Marketing and Processing Company. Dr. Dudin replaces Dr. Fayed Khasawneh who resigned as ARA director last month. Of his new post, he said "it will be challenging." He hopes to improve port facilities, work with the Ministry of Tourism on its plans to construct an inland lagoon in the area, and open Agaba for future investments. "I never asked or lobbied for this post, but once asked to assume the position, I saw it as a call to duty," said Dr. Dudin.

from Allegheny University of the Health Sciences University in Philadelphia, Ciraldo from the University of Florida, Milliken from Tulane University in New Orleans, Ryan from Oxford University, and Lotti from Florence, Kibbi, Karam, and Zeinoun from the American University of Beirut, Tomb from the Jesuit University of Beirut, former Kuwaiti Minister of Health Dr. Al Fouzan, and doctors Sogair from Saudi Arabia, Arryad from Bahrain and Haj Hussein from Syria. Host participants included Dr. Khaled Shreideh of the Higher Council for Science and Technology, Dr. Ghaili Shubeitat of the Amman Surgical Hospital, and Nasser Judeh, director of Jordan Television. Those participants who brought along their families found their children making new friends, picking up some words in other languages and perhaps looking onew of their career opportunities.

LET'S SEE HIS CHART:

The arrival of spring next year will usher in a double, perhaps even triple, special honour of recognition for one of Jordan's most famous heart surgeons, Dr. Daoud Hanania, director of the Arab Centre for Heart and "Special Surgery" will be the first recipient of the Arab American Medical Association, Houston Chapter, Bin Quro Award. The presentation in Houston on March 29 will bring Dr. Hanania back to the city where he trained. The AAMA-Houston instituted the presentation of this award to recognise the achievements of one Arab doctor every year. Thabet Bin Quro was an Arab physician of the seventh century. The AAMA has requested that the award ceremony be held under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein and extended an invitation to the King to be the keynote speaker.



Daoud Hanania

TOWARDS HEALTHY SKIN: An illustrious gathering of professors, scientists and doctors ended an important international conference Wednesday by making valuable recommendations on the ethics of their field. The Second International Conference for Medical and Surgical Dermatology and the Laser, organised by the Middle Eastern Society for Dermatologic Surgery and the Higher Council for Science and Technology and sponsored by Jordan Television as well as private contributors, derived into the latest advances in the use of lasers in dermatologic surgery: chemical peels, liposuction, and fat transfer; and modern antibiotics and their use in treating dermatological diseases. Particular to Jordan was the topic of climatotherapy at the Dead Sea. The conclusions on where and how to apply ethics to the participants' related professions should serve to continually raise their standards and commitment to their expertise. The doctors first agreed that from the onset of teaching and residency, emphasis should be placed on professional ethics and not on the lucrativeness of a medical career. Another point of accord was the need to stress that with the new advances in techniques, doctors, on an individual level, must be prepared and well trained in these developments as well as the related complications, before attempting to apply the new methods and thus delve irresponsibly into unfamiliar territory. At the level of professional societies, the conference participants recommended that such associations exert a more active role in making physicians aware of advances in medicine and dermatology, by incorporating the concept of inter-specialty cooperation. There was also consensus on the setting of guidelines for a framework detailing the limitations and boundaries of the doctors' and scientists' various activities in their specialties, including establishing rules and regulations on who should use and practice certain techniques and creating a format for learning physicians so that they can put their newly acquired knowledge to appropriate practice. Conference President prominent Jordanian dermatologist Dr. Oumeish Oumeish, brought together eminent professionals from the Arab World, and the West to meet, exchange knowledge and ideas, and strike up cooperative endeavours, as well as engage in cultural and social activities such as tours to the country's major sites and functions with Jordanians in various other fields. Among the participants were professors Mohammad Amer of Egypt, Kurban and Fuleihan of Boston University, Arndt and Sobar of Harvard University, doctors Benedetto

DEVELOPMENT MATTERS: On his way to Samaa late Wednesday night was Sufian Tal, former director of the Environment Department. What takes Dr. Tal south is that he has been appointed as director of the United Nations Sustainable Development Programme in Yemen. After leaving the Environment Department in 1990, he served as advisor to the minister of rural and municipal affairs and the environment. At the same time Dr. Tal worked as a part-time consultant for several U.N. agencies and contributed to many environmental studies in most of the Arab countries. He obtained his masters in engineering in Germany and his Ph.D. in Austria. When King Gustaf of Sweden visited Jordan in the late 1980s, he bestowed Sweden's Order of Commander on Dr. Tal for his environmental activities. More recently Dr. Tal has been a reviewer of articles for the United Nations Environment Programme publications called GEO (Global Environment Outlook), and was one of the first people to work on this annual series. Dr. Tal is a founder of the Jordan Environment Society and has been editor of the JES magazine to date.

TOP AGENT: The General Association of Jordanian Travel and Tour Agents voted in a new president last week. He is Mohammad Imam of International Travel Tourism. The low-profiles Mr. Imam takes the seat vacated by the untimely death of Lamiah Haddadin.

SPRAWLING SUPERMARKETS: Expanding businesses large and small are expected to affect local economic indicators.

Past the drawing board stages is the new 7th Circle branch of Safeway which is scheduled to open on Tuesday. The supermarket establishment is one of many large and obviously successful ventures owned by Zahi and Zaher Masri. Others include the Audi and Renault auto sales agencies. Still under construction is a new branch of C-Town, whose owners are residents of New York City. The new supermarket-mall is going up in the Jubilee Circle area, off Wasfi Tal Street, directly across the road from the new Reem Al Bawadi Restaurant. How the two new chains will affect small grocers, butchers, and vegetable vendors in the surrounding neighbourhoods will make for a telling story in itself.

LIE BACK, TAKE YOUR SHOES OFF:

You may have seen them advertised, you may have even sat or lay in one, but for the uninitiated, now is your chance. British Airways has put its new "cuddle seats" for its business class Club World service on display for the public to try out at the Amman Marriott Hotel. Not only that, BA Manager Jordan Mark Hodson, who was assigned to Amman in August, is hosting a dinner Saturday at the Marriott for 350 customers and associates to introduce the seats now installed on BA flights to Amman. The cushy features are that the seat reclines to 165 degrees, and each has its own television with eight channels. But you'll still have to look to a flight attendant to fluff your pillow. British Airways resumed flights to Jordan in 1994. Its aircraft flying to the Kingdom now bear a new logo — each tail is painted with different "images of the world." Next year, in the next lot of planes to undergo a facelift, Jordan will be featured on the tail of a BA plane by a Jordanian designer, who has not yet been announced.



Jabra Khoury (left) joins George Fereos (right), owner of La Casa del Habano in Nicosia, for a smoke at the opening of the Athens branch of La Casa del Habano last May

MAY I BORROW YOUR CUTTER: On a smaller scale, and definitely attracting an upscale clientele is the new venture of bon vivant Jabra Khoury. As proprietor of the Rawan Trading Company which he established in 1985, Mr. Khoury has catered to a small but confirmed list of patrons who frequented his cigar shop in the Bank Al Islami Building in Shmeisani. Now he is opening an authentic La Casa del Habano, the chain of cigar salons conceptualised in Cuba to sell only Cuban cigars plus a variety of accessories and smoker's requisites. Mr. Khoury has thus expanded his shop to include (following mother company regulations) a small sitting salon replete with reading material. La Casa del Habano is "like a small club for cigar smokers," and even has a work-in-humidifier where clients can keep their cigars fresh. Tonight Mr. Khoury inaugurates Jordan's first La Casa del Habano with a reception for "friends of the cigar," and as a special treat will feature the talents of expert cigar roller Cecilio Gutierrez of Havana. Ms. Gutierrez, who arrived in Amman earlier this week, will demonstrate how she rolls her prize-winning cigars at the reception and later at a few hotels in town. Any plans for a "Great Jordanian Smoke-out"?

Jennifer Hamarneh

METS '97 Developments in the computer field on stage

By Jean-Claude Elias

AT LAST week's METS (Middle East Technology Show), apart from the usual, unavoidable "more powerful and faster" Pentium machines, visitors had three main topics of interest to explore.

At the show, a true reflection of developments in the computer field here in Jordan and worldwide, the show-stopper for the third consecutive year has been the Internet.

The two major ISPs (Internet Service Providers) the American Global One and the Jordanian NETS constituted two major poles of attraction. With more ISPs entering the market, those already present are fighting a fierce battle to keep their clients and enlist new ones.

Global One went as far as to offer free modems to a number of new subscribers. NETS is counting on its unique local network called NETS-On-Line that offers users local conferences, chats and information on various topics. NETS-On-Line has no equivalent in the country. Both companies have recently drastically reduced their Internet per-hour rates.

Just after the Internet, ink-jet colour printers certainly were the piece of information technology that was the most popular this year. At METS one could find Lexmark (IBM's brand of printers) Hewlett-Packard and Epson. The latter displayed the widest and most versatile range of affordable colour printers.

Capable of reproducing colour photographs with an amazing output quality, albeit at slower speeds than expensive colour laser printers, ink-jet models are now sold at the average price of JD400. Epson displayed no less than seven models.

Last but not least, large monitors stole part of the show. With the increasing use of Internet software



browsers, image processing programmes and sophisticated games, the standard 14" screen is just not enough anymore. In the eye of the demanding user, a 15" or 17" monitor is slowly becoming a must-have.

Again, the fall of prices and the improvement of the technical characteristics is helping everybody: users and manufacturers alike. Several brands were on display at METS, including and for the first time, the German maker Siemens-Nixdorf. Quality 17" monitors, now available in Jordan for about JD500.

The Jordan Computer Society, the organiser of the Nov. 13-16 show, is trying to give METS an international dimension. Whereas such an undertaking is perfectly honourable, achieving it seems a rather difficult task. Dubai's Gitex is a hard local competitor to beat.

To the credit of METS, however, is the truly "international look" of the show. Booths are well designed and well organised. Carpeting was used in all the floor area to reduce the annoying reverberation of sound in previous years.

The whole place was very clean and tidy. Most participants employed qualified staff that would provide visitors with the explanation they were looking for. Overall visiting METS '97 was a most pleasant experience for the eye and the mind.

By Owen Bowcott

DHAKA — Bina Akhter has the little figure of a young athlete. Lustrous black hair tumbling to her shoulders. When she grins, her smile almost obscures the scar tissue.

Within the past year she has endured seven operations to reconstruct the ravaged left side of her face, in which her sightless eye is an opaque globe.

Bina was the victim of an attack by a spurned suitor who hurled sulphuric acid in her face. The injured 18-year-old is one of about 50 women disfigured each year by a vengeful practice which is on the increase despite carrying the death penalty.

She is determined to prevent the growing number of attacks which, her female supporters say, reflect the downtrodden status of women in Bangladesh.

"I don't care about my life

now, but I want to make sure that others are safe in future," she exclaims. "The man who attacked me, Dano, is walking free around Dhaka. There should be justice. He ought to be hanged. This has to be stopped."

Recently, the Awami League prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, recognised the extent of the problem and called for stricter enforcement of the law.

Bina's ordeal was typical of the casual nature of such violence. "This man Dano, who is 25-years-old, had never spoken to us," she explains. "But he fell for my cousin, Mukti, who is very, very beautiful."

"One day he sent us flowers and a letter. We tore them up and never opened the letter. The small boy who carried the flowers saw what happened and went back to tell him."

"The same night at 2.30 a.m., four men entered our house and woke us up. I saw Dano go to throw the acid and

pushed Mukti away so that her face would be spared.

"It hit me and splashed on to my mother's neck. We started screaming. Everything was burning. Someone put water on my face and part of my nose fell away. My uncle, who chased the men, was beaten unconscious."

The attack ruined the family. Two three-wheeled "mini taxis" which they rented out had to be sold to pay for Bina's hospital and drug treatment. Any hopes of university education have been abandoned.

"There should not be such easy access to these acids," she urges, wiping away a tear. "They can be bought in pharmacies very easily. The government should change the law."

For organised women's groups, such as Nariponko where Bina works, such attacks are indicative of a broader disregard for women's rights. Despite the fact that

both the prime minister and the leader of the opposition, Begum Khaleda Zia, are women, Bangladesh is one of the few countries where female life expectancy is shorter than that of males.

Deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes rather than Islamic faith are blamed by most of the women's groups for their lowly social position.

The exiled writer Taslima Nasreem, who called for the Koran to be revised and fled to Sweden in 1994 following death threats from fundamentalists, does not attract much sympathy. They fear she might provoke a backlash. "The manner in which she talks sometimes is dangerous to the movement," said an official of Mahila Parishad, the Bangladesh Women's Rights Organisation.

Social, not religious, issues are given priority. "Girls are not valued, they are fed less from birth," says Firdous Azim

of Nariponko, which is supported by UNICEF.

Trafficking in girls enticed from impoverished villages to work in brothels is also widespread.

But the situation is improving slowly. The booming garment industry, for example, has created jobs for about one million women in less than 10 years.

The resurgence of acid-throwing attacks has disturbed rather than shocked a country accustomed to countless disasters. Mahbooba Mahmood, of Nariponko, said: "I once met a boy, aged 18, who had carried out an acid attack. He said he was sorry and offered to marry the girl. But she was a member of our group and vowed she would never marry him, so he was executed. Such executions are very rare."

The Guardian

Women show noticeable interest in government's retirement offer

By Samir Ghawi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The large number of queries received by the Ministry of Administrative Development from women civil servants concerning the recently announced incentives to encourage government employees to request retirement has the ministry expecting that the offer will be widely accepted by women.

Saying that around 20,000 civil servants, out of around 155,000 government employees, are eligible to apply for retirement as they have completed the minimum number of years in service, Secretary General Ali Al Sheikh added that it is very difficult to give an estimate about the number of those who will request retirement based on the incentives which end on Nov. 30, 1997.

According to a government decision announced late last month, a civil servant who has completed the minimum service accepted for retirement will be granted

ed the total of five annual increments to be added to the basic salary if he/she requests retirement, and such a request is approved by the Council of Ministers.

The government specified this month only as the period open to receive applications for retirement based on the incentives.

The civil service law does not compel retirement upon completing 20 years of service for men and fifteen years for women but states that the government may put a civil servant on retirement after serving the minimum period required. Mr. Sheikh said. He added that social considerations have been the constraints restricting senior officials from taking decisions to retire their staff.

Indicating that the state treasury pays a total of about JD1 billion in salaries to all persons employed by the government, including military persons, Mr. Sheikh dismissed the effect of some 25,000 retired civil

servants on the payroll.

He saw the problem aggravating when tens of thousands of civil servants will be retiring or close to retirement after ten years. "The real problem was between 1985 and 1995 when the governments were hiring an average 5,000 persons each year," Mr. Sheikh emphasised.

The secretary general declined to give details regarding the present payroll or the retired military personnel.

Asked about the criteria under which the government will implement its downsizing, Mr. Sheikh stressed the productivity factor as highlighted by His Majesty King Hussein.

"Seniority or number of years in service will not be considered in any way and at no time," the secretary general assured those who have long years of service.

He went as far as saying that there are no indications that experienced and long serving government employees are less dedicated to work nor less keen regarding work standards

and ethics.

"They have built an image which they would want to be kept unmarred," he said of the "old" civil servants.

Emphasising the productivity as the sole standard to determine the fate of civil servants who complete the minimum years of service, Mr. Sheikh indicated that ministers, secretary generals at ministries or director generals of departments will be the key persons to measure the productivity and decide whether an employee should be put on retirement or not.

He admitted that such a way of measuring productivity has its drawbacks but "there is no other way except to assume that decision-makers have good judgement putting down their own criteria for measuring productivity."

Asked to clarify when it will be possible for those who request retirement to leave their jobs, the secretary general replied: "Once approved, the retirement will take effect from the date of the request."

Protectionist backlash biggest threat to world growth in new century — OECD

PARIS (AFP) — Living standards in some parts of the world could soar by 270 per cent in the next quarter century, as long as there is no return to protectionism and non-industrialised countries are fully integrated into the world economy, the Organisation of Economic and Development (OECD) has said.

"The biggest dangers are to reverse policies that in the past have brought the highest benefits" and to return to protectionist policies, Helmut Reisen of the OECD's development centre told a press conference.

"A reversal of the process of globalisation could lead to global fragmentation, damaging prosperity and political stability," the OECD said in a new report, "The World in 2020: Towards a New Global Age."

And the OECD said its forecast of an 80 per cent rise in living standards in industrialised countries, and a 270 per cent rise in non-OECD countries, also depends on integrating the

emerging markets into the global economy.

The "Big Five" non-OECD economies — China, Russia, Brazil, India and Indonesia — are playing an increasing role in the world economy, and by the year 2020 could account for more than a third of total world gross domestic product, about the same as the OECD countries.

China would be the largest single economy, with GDP half that of the whole of the OECD.

The industrialised countries will also be relying on these economies for much of their own growth during the period, as these markets will be developing considerably faster than the OECD.

But this is the sunny side of the picture, supposing that governments have the courage to push ahead with more trade liberalisation, labour market reform, and opening up their capital markets where necessary.

If these changes do not take place, the OECD paints a far less rosy scenario, with GDP growth in the Big Five averaging less than five per cent, compared with more than seven per cent in the more optimistic scenario.

The difference is slight for China, with GDP growth of eight per cent in the worse case, rather than 8.25, but for Indonesia it falls from seven per cent to 4.25, for India from almost seven to 4.25, for Brazil from 5.5 to just over three and for Russia from almost six to 3.75.

For the OECD countries, GDP growth to 2020 is generally lower, at just below three per cent in the best case, and little more than two in the absence of the required policy moves.

The report also said that developing countries should continue to open their capital markets, despite the Southeast Asian crisis and the earlier Mexican crisis, enacting appropriate policies to maintain financial stability while attracting investment.

Investment will continue in developing countries because OECD countries have huge pension and other savings funds which need to be invested, the report said.

The report warned, however, that rapid economic growth by developing countries to catch up with the developed world raises problems of pollution and water supplies.

The level of greenhouse gas emissions, for example, is likely to rise sharply in both the high growth and low growth scenarios, despite hoped-for international action to curb such emissions.

In the high-growth scenario, carbon emissions are seen rising to more than 14 billion tonnes by 2020, with the Big Five accounting for about 43 per cent of the increase and two-thirds of the total, compared with around a half currently.

In the low-growth scenario, emissions would still rise from around six billion in 1990 to 11 billion in 2020, with those from the OECD little changed at around five billion.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20.

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

1997

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be sure to get all the necessary career activities out of the way today, so that you will have the days ahead much more freely. Leave yourself some time to spend later this evening and thereby your life less stressful.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Find a way today to improve your efficiency so you'll have more time for yourself and thereby not rushing around so much. A new contact can help your financial status later this evening, so listen carefully.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Study your obligations today, and take care of those which are most pressing. You will find that your mate is very supportive in your career activities, so show that you do appreciate his or her enthusiasm.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Make practical plans with your fellow associates today, and get their approval of your ideas before proceeding. Do something special to please your mate and he or she will show you how much you are appreciated.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Use some enthusiasm today when handling your more mundane chores, and you'll soon be finished. Take some time for personal pleasures later this evening, especially those with involved your loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Make some special arrangements today to meet with fellow associates and devise a course of action for your success. Don't take any risks with your reputation or your health later this evening and thereby become prosperous.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This is a good day today to take care of little tasks which need doing around the house or those connected with career activities. A close friend can offer some fine advice, so pick his or her brain.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Any communications or career activities will be successful today, however, pleasure will be found only with loved ones. Visit a friend who is feeling poorly and make him or her feel much more content.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Seek out the advice today of an expert before you go on that little trip with a friend. Be sure you watch your budget later this evening, which could always use some improvement for those lean times in the days ahead.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Do some labour towards gaining your personal goals today, then attend to improving the appearance of your property. Don't spend too much on any changes which could leave the well dry and incomplete.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Get the support of your mate today before beginning a new project. Tonight is a good time for the social scene, especially with close friends. Try to use your time more profitably in the days ahead.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A trusted friend can give you the support you need today if you let person know of your wishes. Be more thoughtful of your mate later this evening and show him or her more respect, which will be appreciated.

Birthstone of November: Topaz — Tiger's Eye

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Today you'll be pushed to think and react fast. Be careful. Things will be changing quickly. You'll have to use all your resources to make the right decisions in a split second. The only exception is in the area of romance. Don't try to push your sweetheart into anything.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This is an action-packed day. Be careful when you're driving, too. There will be all sorts of strange things happening. You hate to rush into matters, but you may have to abandon that philosophy for a while. Things won't be much time for pondering. Be prepared.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This is an absolutely terrible day. You love a stimulating environment, but the people around you may get a little frazzled. Be careful that doesn't happen to you, too. Stay away from anything that might make you jittery. You don't want to become ineffective. You don't want to become a pauper.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You're going to be confronted today. It's either a question that hasn't been resolved or something that needs to be done. For example, you may decide to move or completely redecorate the house. You could paint the walls or get new furniture. Make it just the way you want it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's a lot of activity around you but not much sense of direction. You're the catalyst factor. Help people make the right decisions. They're a bit frazzled. You are one of the few who will be steady and reliable. You'll find lots of opportunities to use your management skills.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Today it might be prudent simply to stay out of the way. People feel passionately about the issues, both ways. To you it looks like they're being ridiculous. Don't laugh too loud or you'll draw attention to yourself. Remember, you want to keep a low profile.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You'll wake up with a start, realising there are about zillion things you need to do. The trouble is, you don't really know how to begin. Today, you could get a shove in the right direction. A confrontation will motivate you to try something new. This could turn out to be fun.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Your intuition is excellent. You're picking up on a lot of innuendoes. This is very helpful in making decisions. There are difficulties, though. You see that something needs to be done, but you can't quite do it. Something you already promised is in the way. Fix that first.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You need to focus more attention on finances. It's time to bring money into a joint account. There's more going out than coming in. What you need is a brand new idea. If you can't find it all by yourself, ask around. Somebody else may have it.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Everyone wants everyone else to do things, and quickly. That tends to create a lot of action. You're right in the middle of it. To win, listen to everyone else's input. Then, use as much of it as possible. Otherwise, they'll fight you tooth and nail.

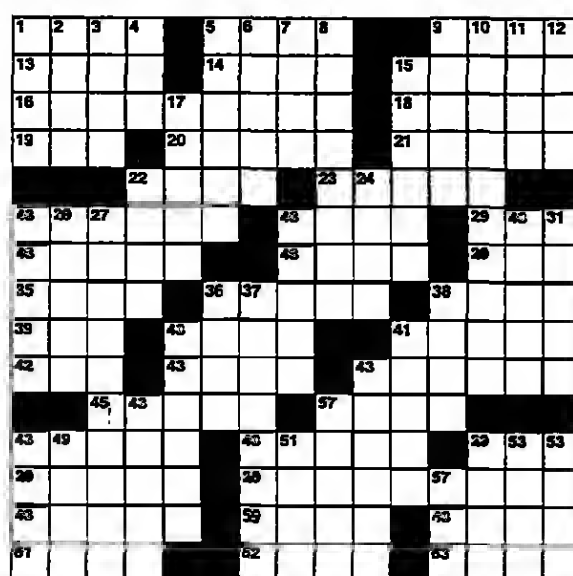
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) It looks like you're becoming interested in doing something different. It's a little farther out than you've ever gone before. You're entering another growing phase. Take another class. Pick one that will contribute to your work, not conflict. Better call for a catalogue.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Your intuition is excellent. Use it to find a path through all the confusion. You're also strong and confident. It's not enough to be creative. You've also got to sell what you make. If you're both imaginative and practical, you'll have everything you need.

Birthstone of November: Topaz — Tiger's Eye

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS
1 Vanish
5 Disfigure
9 Marcel
13 Subterfuge
14 Current fashion
15 Naval detection device
16 "I used to be a pilot," he —
18 Emcee
19 Susan of TV
20 Street language
21 Originate
22 Question word
23 Mature
25 Once popular songs
28 Kind of package
29 Initials on a Navy ship
32 Swimming holes
33 Dedicated
34 "One Day — Time"



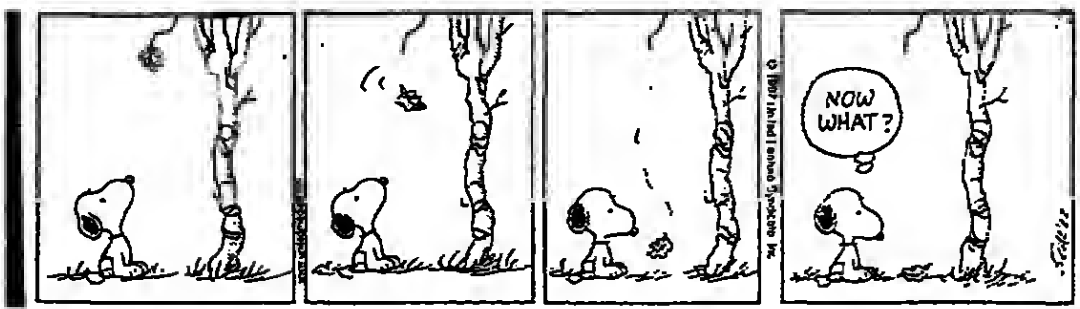
by Frances Burton

3 Gilmore
4 Elusive one
5 Grins
6 Arthur — Doyle
7 Yemen city
8 Vanessa or Lynn
9 Mary Tyler —
10 "You're a wicked glutton," he —
11 Pads
12 Galle
13 Configured
14 Cigar residue
15 Curing
16 Rainbow goddess
17 Soap —
18 Heavy material
19 "I love beagles," he —
20 Jeweler's weight
21 Put on
22 Sward
23 Baseball's Ruth
24 City in Scotland
25 Submerge

AMPS SLAM CAPON
CARP LURE ARO
TRIO ALMS DELAY
AUGUSTUS CAESAR
SHE APT
RODEO HELP GAEL
ACE GIRL EDIBLE
THE GUNS OF AUGUST
ERRANT PURR TIO
DEEP EVEN ESSEN
UNI ASE
SAINT AUGUSTINE
SALAD BRAT TRAY
IMAGE LALO LORE
TERROR ELLS ENDS

40 Patisserie
41 Actress Lotte
42 Headband
43 Worship
47 Candle features
48 Burgeoned
49 Scoria
50 Wheel shaft
51 Love, to Juan
52 Walter — Mare
53 Vortex
54 Rascal

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen



JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

MIDUH

KNACS

GLANID

WASALY

Print answer here: _____

Saturday's Jumble: SYLPH PATIO DAMASK BECALM

Answer: Why the swampy shop fired the menuist — SHE LACKED POLISH



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1997
Black Tribune Media Services, Inc.

21 to April 24: Today you'll be pushed to the limit. Be careful. Things will be changing fast. Be sure to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to May 20: There's an action-packed day ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to June 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to July 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to August 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to September 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to October 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to November 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to December 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to January 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to February 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to March 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to April 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to May 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to June 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to July 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to August 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to September 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to October 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to November 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

21 to December 20: There's a lot of action ahead for you. You'll be busy all day long. You'll have to use all your resources to make the most of this time. Don't let it pass you by.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Deceptive advertisements victimise many young job-seekers

**** YOUSEF ABDULLAH, 22 years old,** read an advertisement about a job that can bring a monthly income of around JD400. As the terms for employment required first attending a course and paying a JD50 fee, he and 17 other job-seekers registered for the training course. "We attended lectures for two days and were shocked that on the third day the office which hired us was not there," Mr. Abdullah said.

This story is only one of many that happen as a result of advertisements in local dailies offering employment to ambitious and good-looking young people who need not have any work experience.

Amjad Ouri wonders why such ads are not under control and stresses that there should be a responsible party to check on the contents of the advertisements.

"I read an exciting advertisement one day and went to apply for the job dreaming of the attractive JD350 salary a month," Mr. Ouri, 24 years old, said. "I was told by the advertiser that the job entails selling 150 lottery tickets to earn a JD90 salary in addition to a ten per cent commission." In total, the amount that Mr. Ouri could earn would be as high as JD150 if he sells 450 tickets a month.

Isam Al Touni said he had approached three different companies which published nearly similar ads. "They told me that I have to sell new types of home appliances and that I will be earning a 20 per cent commission of the amount from selling 30 pieces a day," Mr. Touni said the ads have portrayed the jobs in a totally different manner which can be acquired easily.

Sami Al Hilou, 22 years old, registered for a computer and sales course but was never able to find the office where he registered after paying the JD70 fee that was required for the course.

As for Samir Samhan, the story was still different. He accepted the work as a salesman for JD300 but only after agreeing to work for JD60 during a three-month trial period. He paid for his own transportation and endured until he completed the trial period only to be told that he was not suitable for the job. Mr. Samhan found out that he was the latest victim in a scheme that employs young people for only three months at low pay (Al Ra'i).

Jordan's first GDR issue to be listed by year end

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuters

AMMAN — Jordan's first Global Depository Receipt (GDR) offering, by Arab Potash Company, is to be officially launched in Tokyo today and is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

The Tokyo launch of the \$35-\$40 million GDR offering will be followed by road-shows in Australia, Sydney, Rotterdam, Paris and Geneva, investment bankers said.

London-based investors are set to meet Arab Potash's management, lead manager Nomura International and co-managers from Nov. 27. The last roadshow stop, in early December, will be aimed at U.S. investors, they said.

Arab Potash's GDR listing, which will help focus investor interest on both Jordan and the firm, is expected on the London Stock Exchange by Dec. 12.

Nomura International's decision not to delay the issue after the Asian financial upheaval was mainly due to the crisis's minimal effect on regional equities, investment analysts said.

The first offering from the Middle East since the Asian market turmoil, a public offering by the Gulf-based insurer ARIG with a GDR component, was launched successfully earlier this month.

Analysts say the issue should go well.

"The profitability, financial structure of the company, the norms of supply and demand (for potash) are factors that encourage global investors," said Mifteh Aqel, a senior banker.

Arab Potash, a major world producer, has good long-term earnings potential, analysts say. They forecast current annual sales of around \$180 million to double once projects to boost extraction of the Dead Sea's mineral wealth are completed by 2000.

They say the undervalued bluechip company leads the world in its field, operationally and on financial performance. Its lowest unit cost in the industry allows it to realise higher gross profit margins, even compared to its Israeli counterpart Dead Sea Works operating on the other shore.

The GDR issue price range is set at a premium to the current market price of around JD6.5 (\$9.2) a share.

The issue should attract emerging market funds which have targeted the Jordanian market, but have been shut out from several bluechips due to a shortage of stock.

Arab Potash is 55.4 per cent owned by government, while Kuwait, Iraq, the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank and other Arab government's hold substantial minority stakes.

Merrill Lynch moves on MAM to create top global fund manager

LONDON (AFP) — U.S. investment bank Merrill Lynch is to create one of the world's top fund management groups through a friendly takeover of Mercury Asset Management (MAM) for 3.1 billion pounds (\$5.3 billion) which was unveiled yesterday.

By acquiring MAM, the largest British investment fund management group alongside Schroders, Merrill Lynch will increase funds under management by 65 per cent to \$450 billion.

This will put it in third place in the global fund management industry, behind Fidelity Investments of the United States and Groupe AXA of France.

"For Merrill Lynch, Mercury is an ideal strategic fit, and the acquisition represents a quantum leap towards our goal of becoming a global leader in the asset management business, one of the most attractive segments of the financial services industry," said David Komansky, chairman and chief executive officer of Merrill Lynch.

Merrill Lynch offered 17 pounds in cash per share in MAM. This represented a premium of 31.7 per cent on the MAM share price on Tuesday of 12.91 pounds.

MAM, whose board unanimously accepted the offer, had assets of 104.4 billion pounds (\$177 billion) under management on Sept. 30.

Merrill Lynch's president, Herbert Allison told a news conference he expected the takeover to be completed "as early as January," and assured that there would be no job losses as a result of the merger.

Analysts in London said that the price was very generous, but the deal made strategic sense for Merrill Lynch, which is in the top league of U.S. global investment banks alongside Morgan Stanley Dean Witter and Salomon Brothers.

"Merrill Lynch is writing out a very big cheque but it attains both parties' strategies," said Sarah Ing from HSBC James Capel. Another banking analyst, from a leading London finance house, commented: "Merrill is one step ahead of the game, it made a very major strategic move into fund management in Europe. It allows them to move onto a new stage, by securing the quality of their earnings stream through increasing the fund management component."

In a statement, Merrill Lynch said that the acquisition would pursue a strategy of achieving a higher proportion of stable fee-based revenues, expanding funds under management and further increasing the proportion of its non-U.S. revenues.

The New York-based investment bank said the deal would also strengthen its position in Britain and enhance "growth prospects in the important European and Asian markets."

Merrill Lynch's strong retail network in the United States and countries such as Australia would enable MAM to distribute its fund management products far more widely.

Joining the group would give MAM "the ability to distribute its range of investment products on a global basis," the statement said.

The London banking analyst said that the remaining independent fund managers in Britain, including M and G, Perpetual and Henderson, could become takeover targets.

"It's all about global consolidation, this is a global game in which these fund managers are pygmies," he said.

Under the deal, MAM will retain its existing management and independence in investment decisions.

MAM was once a subsidiary of the British investment bank SG Warburg, but became an entirely separate entity when Warburg was bought by Swiss Bank Corporation (SBC) in 1995.

Funds at the asset management group are controlled by Carol Galley, seen as the most powerful woman in the City of London financial district.

MAM, as a leading shareholder in several blue-chip British companies, sometimes plays a decisive role in bid battles, such as the hostile takeover of hotel group Forte by Granada in 1996.

Merrill Lynch is a leading global investment bank, with 54,200 employees in 45 countries around the world.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
HOUSING SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 19/11/1997
TELEPHONE: 607111 / 607119

PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
2,340	1,660	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	10.3	0.00	4	627	1351	1.85	1.84	-0.01
2,480	2,150	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.00	11	2250	5785.3	2.60	2.60	-
5,200	4,600	THE HOUSING BK.	15.2	3.80	2	550	2805	5.10	5.10	-
4,180	2,070	JOR. KOWATY BANK	10.9	0.00	12	7783	15982	2.08	2.05	-0.03
4,050	2,950	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	15.0	3.27	8	1441	6276	2.26	2.24	-0.02
1,530	1,210	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	9	0.00	1	450	527	1.20	1.17	-0.03
3,900	3,080	JOR. INV. FUND	24.5	0.00	1	10000	38100	3.81	3.81	-
1,900	870	BETT. AL-HAL. (BETHEA)	16.4	0.00	5	720	328	0.46	0.46	-
5,150	3,390	ARAB BANKING CO.	17.1	0.00	1	200	710	3.73	3.55	-0.18
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 239.15 CHNG: -0.07 45 44798 124131										
2,350	1,820	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.8	4.43	1	200	410	2.14	2.05	-0.09
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 116.21 CHNG: -0.48 1 200 410										
2,050	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC. PWR.	9.2	5.26	9	16900	32291	1.91	1.90	-0.01
1,550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	3	1000	1180	1.18	1.18	-
1,010	820	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.6	0.00	1	5000	4550	0.91	0.91	-
1,680	1,150	HIG. EAST HOTEL	15.5	0.00	1	1680	2112	1.34	1.28	-0.06
3,900	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	9.6	0.00	11	3350	12365	3.68	3.68	-
1,100	900	SARAKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	1	200	199	0.99	0.97	-0.02
2,230	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	8.2	6.00	3	1600	2787	1.73	1.72	-0.01
950	640	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	2	200	143	0.72	0.72	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 109.89 CHNG: -0.30 33 29900 55591										
4,450	3,030	JOR. CHEMIST FACT.	20.9	3.54	5	18825	58542	3.12	3.11	-0.01
2,140	3,000	JOR. PRESERVE. INDUS.	9.6	2.82	11	5831	20651	3.80	3.55	-0.25
7,050	5,570	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.9	3.13	2	10033	64208	6.40	6.40	-
11,160	9,100	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.4	8.25	8	880	9494	10.60	10.78	0.18
3,260	2,330	INDUSTRIAL CON. AG.	9	0.00	9	1441	2124	1.42	1.49	0.07
4,700	3,040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	11.5	4.78	16	7654	31926	4.17	4.18	0.01
1,670	1,020	JOR. PIPES MANFCT.	16.7	5.93	10	3250	4303	1.35	1.35	-
1,480	1,050	RAPHA INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	5	750	998	1.33	1.33	-
6,000	4,300	DAR ALDAMA BV. INV.	13.5	4.55	13	8116	44688	5.56	5.50	-0.06
1,690	480	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.9	0.00	2	1500	705	0.47	0.47	-
1,230	800	ARAB PAPER CON. IND.	25.4	0.00	1	150	125	0.83	0.83	-
770	510	NATIONAL INDUS.	9	0.00	7	15550	8058	0.54	0.56	0.02
1,200	470	1PETHERED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	4	1700	816	0.48	0.48	-
920	530	JOR. ROYALTY INDUS.	9	0.00	1	1500	885	0.59	0.59	-
2,970	1,400	UNIV. CHEM. INDUS.	12.8	7.04	2	1000	1413	1.42	1.42	-
890	530	JOR. SULPHUR-CHEM.	9	0.00	15	5700	3477	0.61	0.61	-
1,570	1,120	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	16.3	5.47	6	1717	1150	0.67	0.67	-
1,880	950	UNIV. MODN. INDUS.	9	2.22	20	9700	9422	0.97	0.97	-
1,210	800	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	10.8	12.50	5	1950	1560	0.80	0.80	-
1,330	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.1	0.00	20	18950	16517	0.87	0.88	0.01
2,090	1,340	EL -RAY READY WEAR	49.6	0.00	1	750	1058	1.40	1.41	0.01
1,330	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.7	0.00	13	17450	21289	1.20	1.22	0.02
1830	730	JORDANIAN STEEL	34.4	6.58	3	2500	1900	0.76	0.76	-
840	570	HIG. EAST COMPLEX	7.4	16.67	6	1900	1123	0.60	0.60	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 117.07 CHNG: +0.17 185 138680 307795										
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 172.22 CHNG: 0.00 264 213578 487926										
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 19/11/1997										
580	300	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	3	2250	743	0.33	0.33	-
610	370	JOR. TRADE PAC.	10.1	0.00	7	13950	5301	0.38	0.38	-
800	660	UNION INV. SOF	9	0.00	9	15398	3848	0.26	0.26	-
570	350	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	8	0.00	8	10300	4120	0.40	0.40	-
690	440	CENTURY INV. GROUP	9	0.00	1	250	263	1.00	1.05	0.05
530	320	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	5	3750	1913	0.49	0.51	0.02
380	230	NATL. MULT. ENG. MANICO	9	0.00	7	4250	1365	0.32	0.32	-
660	370	BAZAN DIES & HOULDS	9	0.00	2	500	190	0.37	0.38	0.01
720	550	WIDEAST PETROL 751	9	0.00	4	834	315	0.62	0.63	0.01
1,400	860	UNION TOBACCO 751	9	0.00	29	42350	47292	1.32	1.35	0.03
720	550	WIDEAST PETROL 751	9	0.00	1	500	4288	0.64	0.64	-
670	290	INDUS. ENG.	9	0.00	1	500	150	0.30	0.30	-
820	590	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	1	80	31	0.61	0.62	0.01
1,000	640	WAT. AL-JUBAYL 751	91.8	0.00	8	3350	1374	0.41	0.41	-
1,050	720	ARAB INTL. FOOD FACT.	48.7	0.00	8	3618	3618	0.98	0.98	-
GRAND TOTAL 106 113200 76919										

Travel packages available for top fashion festival

The Fashion Shopping Festival '97, taking place in Cyprus from 29th November until 14th December, brings together the largest collection of designer clothes ever seen in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.

The collection of 100,000 outfits from the leading international names of fashion is being offered to the public at wholesale prices, up to 50 per cent off the normal retail figure.

Top names available include Guy Laroche, Louis Feraud, Rochas and Cacharel from France, Diane Freis from Hong Kong, and leading Italian designers specialising in menswear.

Some 4,000 overseas visitors are expected from Russia, Greece, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon, together with an anticipated 5,000 local visitors.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates										
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF	ESP
US Dollar	1.7342	0.5922	1.4065	127.35	1.4153	1697.80	19542	5.8066		
DE Mark	0.5788	-	0.3412	0.8108	73.40	0.8157	578.67	1.1267	3.3466	
GB Sterling	1.5885	2.9285	-	2.3753	214.59	2.3897	2864.53	3.2970	9.7922	
CH Franc	0.7110	123.27	0.4207	-	90.48	1.0060	1206.44	138.97	4.1264	
JP Yen	0.0079	1.3637	0.4655	1.1057	-	1.1127	13.35	153.67	4.5649	
CA Dollar	0.7066	1.2183	0.4169	0.9912	1.11	-	1193.15	1.3732	4.0812	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0210	0.3485	0.0828	1337.61	0.8331	-	11.50	3.4177	
NL Guilder	0.5117	86.73	0.3090	71.88	84.99	0.7242	868.25	-	2.8712	
FR Franc	0.1722	0.2986	0.1018	24.2089	21.87	0.2437	33.64	33.6400	-	

Middle Eastern Currencies	
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Hingis and Novotna advance at WTA finale

NEW YORK (AFP) — World number one Martina Hingis and second seed Jana Novotna took straight-set victories here Tuesday to reach the second round of the two million-dollar WTA Championships.

Swiss teen Hingis won 7-6 (7/3), 5-2, when Dutch veteran Brenda Schultz-McCarthy retired after tearing off a toenail on her right foot.

Novotna rallied in both sets for a 6-4, 6-4 win over Spain's

Conchita Martinez and Croatia's Iva Majoli, the sixth seed and French Open winner, beat Germany's Anke Huber, a 1995 finalist here, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/2).

Hingis was pushed in her second appearance here, having reached last year's five-set final only to lose to Steffi Graf. This year Hingis has 12 titles, a record \$3 million in winnings and a favoured role.

"I had a tough tournament last week, so my legs are a little bit sore," Hingis said. "That's where you have to jump off on the serve. That wasn't easy for me all the time."

Hingis saved three break points in the ninth game of the opening set and took a 5-4 lead. Schultz-McCarthy served two straight aces to win the 12th game and force the tie-breaker, but Hingis won it to claim the set.

"I was just hoping that she would not hold up serving that well," Hingis said. "Fortunately, I won one of the points on her serve."

Schultz-McCarthy asked for a trainer during the second game of the second set and continued to play, surrendering service breaks in the fifth and seventh games before surrendering.

"I went to volley in the first game of the second set and I had to reach and my nail went off my toe completely," Schultz-McCarthy said. "After that, I could hardly walk. I couldn't put pressure on it. It was just blood."

Majoli won a tight first set and the players traded breaks in the second before heading to a second consecutive tie-breaker. Huber won the first two points, but dropped the next seven and slammed her racket against the carpet in disgust.

First-round play concludes Wednesday with Lindsay Davenport, the third seed, plays fellow American Mary Joe Fernandez and fifth-seeded American Monica Seles faces Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.



Top seed Martina Hingis from Switzerland hits a forehand return during her first round match against Brenda Schultz-McCarthy from the Netherlands at the Chase Championships of the Corel WTA Tour at New York's Madison Square Garden. Hingis won 7-6 5-2 after Schultz-McCarthy retired from the match (Reuters photo)



Anke Huber from Germany reacts to a lost point during her first round loss to sixth seed Iva Majoli from Croatia at the Chase Championships of the Corel WTA Tour at New York's Madison Square Garden. Huber lost 6-7 6-7 (Reuters photo)

Dortmund still behind in German League

BONN (AFP) — Goals from Jorg Heinrich and Russian striker Vladimir But gave European Cup winners Borussia Dortmund a 2-1 win over newcomers Wolfsburg on Tuesday lifting them four places in the Bundesliga — still 15 points adrift of leaders Kaiserslautern.

Elsewhere Werder Bremen beat 10-man Schalke 04 2-1 ending a 501 minute goal drought while Duisburg beat Hamburg 3-0, the first time they had beaten them since 1981.

Heinrich opened Dortmund's account in the 45th minute, exploiting a misunderstanding between keeper Uwe Zimmerman and defender Frank Greiner while But struck in the 60th minute to give Dortmund a 2-0 cushion.

However, American international Claudio Reyna jangled Borussia's nerves with a 73rd minute goal but the injury ridden European champions held on for a morale boosting three points and the relative heights for this season of 10th position in the table.

Schalke, the Bundesliga's strongest defence, was breached twice in three minutes by Werder Bremen.

Marco Bode broke Bremen's horror run of 501 minutes without a goal when he scored in the 37th minute, quickly followed up three minutes later by the matchwinner from Egyptian Hany Ramzy.

Schalke had taken the lead through Rene Eykelkamp in the 34th minute but lost their rhythm when Marco Van Hoogdale was sent off for his second bookable offence in the 57th minute.

Bachirou Salou gave Duisburg an early lead against Hamburg, minutes after he should have hit the target.

Not even Sven Kmetzsch, newly promoted to Bertl Vogts' German national squad, was able to revive Hamburg and Michael Zeyer extended Duisburg's lead on the stroke of half-time while Thomas Puschnann made it three for the home team after 80 minutes.

VfL Bochum's Bulgarian signing Georgi Donkov snatched his side an invaluable point with a last minute strike at Karlsruhe and could have even grabbed two more if he had been more on target in injury time.

Karlsruhe went ahead in the 64 minute, however, when Alex Nyarko headed home. However, Bochum stormed back and inspired by Wosz's replacement Peter Peschel were rewarded with Donkov's late equaliser.

Top of the table Kaiserslautern play at Borussia Monchengladbach while champions Bayern Munich's game against Bayer Leverkusen will not be played until November 30th.

Inter Milan lose but reach Cup quarters

MONZA (AFP) — Inter Milan reached the Italian Cup quarter-finals here on Tuesday night despite losing only their second match of the season in a 1-0 defeat to Piacenza.

Giovanni Stroppa scored the 88th minute winner in a third round tie which Inter, fielding a second string side, treated like a training match after winning the away leg 3-0 with a hat-trick from Ronaldo.

Inter, whose San Siro pitch has been re-turfed and is being prepared for Saturday night's derby with AC Milan, also failed to score for the first time this season.

Striker Marco Branca came closest in the first half, his header forcing a superb save from the first of Piacenza goalkeeper Sergio Marcon.

Coach Gigi Simoni rested Ronaldo for the second half and sent on Nigerian Olympic champion Nwankwo Kanu, who has been dogged by injury since returning from heart surgery.

Stroppa fluffed a chance to give Piacenza the lead within five minutes of the re-start, while Marcon stopped three glaring opportunities for Frenchman Benoit Calet, Uruguay's Alvaro Recoba and Francesco Moriero.

However, Stroppa finally knocked the ball home in a desperate goalmouth scramble just as they headed into injury time.

Inter's record in their 15 matches before Tuesday's upset was 13 wins, a 1-1 league draw with Lazio and a 2-1 UEFA Cup defeat at home to Lyon.

Magic interested in boxing

LAS VEGAS (AFP) — Don King appears to have a new rival for his title as the premier American boxing promoter — former National Basketball Association star Magic Johnson.

Johnson has applied for a license to promote boxing shows in Nevada, the first step on the way to being a major factor in the sport.

The former Los Angeles Lakers star was forced out of the game after contracting the virus which causes AIDS. But he is a regular spectator at ringside of major bouts, including Evander Holyfield's triumph over Michael Moorer here earlier this month.

"I personally spoke to Magic and he seems very enthused about this," said Marc Ratner, executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission. "By the reception he gets at every fight card here, it's obvious he is a very popular man, and I know he's a good businessman. I'm sure he would not attempt to do this unless he had thought things out carefully."

Johnson developed an interest in boxing through his association with Laker owner Jerry Buss, who has staged fight cards in Los Angeles. Buss is majority owner of the Lakers while Johnson has a minority share.

Footballers profit from cash boom

LONDON (AFP) — Football's increased profile and big-money wages have rocketed many of its leading players among the top British sporting earners this year. But for all football's increased profile and salary expectations it still lags behind established big-earning sports like boxing and motor racing, which provide five of British sport's top seven earners in the estimated list.

According to the BBC Radio 5 Live Sports Yearbook 1998, published early next month, 14 English Premiership footballers take home more than £1 million (\$1.65 million) a year with injured England striker Alan Shearer pocketing a massive £3.5 million as the sport's top earner.

Manchester United winger Ryan Giggs and Liverpool midfielder Paul Ince, the next best football earners, fail to match Shearer's salary between them and have to contend with a mere £1.65 million apiece. Tottenham's Les Ferdinand and Manchester United's Teddy Sheringham, who both secured major signing-on fees following recent big-money moves, trail just behind them while David Beckham promises to eclipse them all having earned £1.35 million in only his second year as a Manchester United regular.

"Footballers are now picking up major salaries because of all the money coming into the sport," explained book editor Pete Nichols. "We estimate that the average Premiership footballer earns around

£350,000 a year — and that's before sponsorship deals are added on top.

"The increased profile next summer's World Cup should give the England players will boost their earnings even further. Players like Paul Scholes aren't even in the list this year but could be massive in 1998.

"Britain's biggest sports earner was heavyweight star Lennox Lewis, who occupied the same position when Radio 5 first compiled the list five years ago, having earned all but £150,000 of his £6.4 million from three fights.

World featherweight champion Naseem Hamed cashed in £5.8 million for his flamboyant boxing skills, a lucrative contract with Adidas and considerable endorsement deals in the Middle East, where his face appears on orange juice cartons. Damon Hill claimed £5.3 million and Formula One rivals Johnny Herbert (£2.5 million) and David Coulthard (£2 million) are also in the top 10.

Golfer Nick Faldo has dropped down the list to fifth after an unfruitful year on the course, although sponsorship and appearance fees still enabled him to earn £3.4 million. Hovering just below the top 10 is Greg Rusedski, who has earned £1.6 million in the most successful year of his tennis career with his appearance in the U.S. Open final and his leading sponsor Nike now marketing him in global terms.



Australian soccer players challenge each other for the ball during a training session at Al Shabab stadium in Dubai November 19. A jet-lagged Australian squad set up base here on Tuesday to prepare for the first leg of their World Cup playoff against Iran in Tehran on November 19 (Reuters photo)

Iran pledges warm welcome for Australian team

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran vowed on Wednesday to give the Australia football team the warmest of welcomes when they arrive here this weekend for their World Cup decider.

The promise came after David Hill, the Soccer Australia chairman, voiced concern over living conditions in Tehran in the run-up to Saturday's match.

The head of Iran's football federation, Daryush Mostafavi, said his offices would "deploy all their resources to extend a meritorious hospitality to the Australian football players and members of delegation."

On Wednesday Hill said Iran was a long-established member of the international football community but conditions there were harsh with football officials having to bring their own food and water supply.

His remarks came as his team travelled to Tehran in the first-leg of the World Cup play-off with Iran on Saturday.

Iran lost to Japan in the third and fourth placing match of the Asian World Cup qualifier in Malaysia last weekend and are forced into the two-leg play-off against Australia to try and earn a berth to the finals.

The return leg of the match against Iran will be held in Melbourne on November 29.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) slammed Hill for his negative remarks on living conditions in Tehran "Iran is a modern state with a fairly high standard of living. It is hard therefore to understand Hill's logic that the Australian team has to carry food and water into Iran for the match in question," said AFC General-Secretary Peter Velappan.

"The AFC would also like to remind Hill that Iran has an age old tradition for hospitality. Teams which have played in Iran in the past have always been well received in the spirit of friendship," he added.

Velappan said Hill's remarks were made in bad taste and were presumptuous.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANDAH HIRSH

Both vulnerable. North deals.

Assuming four spades could be made, East-West have a profitable line in clubs.

West led the king of clubs, then shifted to a trump. Declarer made a superb play to render the defenders helpless by playing low from dummy and allowing East's nine to win the trick! The contract could no longer be touched. Declarer can win any red-suit return in hand, arrange a club ruff on the table, then draw trumps and run diamonds for 10 tricks. (If East reverts to clubs, declarer ruffs in dummy, cashes the ace of trumps then comes to hand with the king of diamonds or ace of hearts to draw the rest of the trumps.)

The defenders can wrest control of the hand easily enough. West should simply continue with the ace of clubs, forcing dummy to ruff. As long as East waits to ruff the fourth diamond, declarer will have to concede a trump and two hearts in addition to the club the defense has already taken.

What if, after ruffing the club, declarer ducks a trump? East wins and perseveres with clubs. No matter in which hand declarer ruffs, East must score another trump trick and a heart.

Many hands hinge on the ability of one side or the other to gain control of the trump suit. Follow the play of this deal.

Note that the Moroccan 4-3 spade fit offers the only chance for game. Even so, we would have liked to see how the auction would have progressed had West made a takeout double over the one-spade response.

Opening lead: King of ♠

THE BIDDING: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

10 Pass 1♠ Pass

2♠ Pass 4♠ Pass

3♠ Pass

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	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	SLEEP WALKERS Shows: 3:30, 6:00 only	HERCULES Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:45		

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Sports

Jordan Times, Thursday-Friday, November 20-21, 1997 11

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Women's World Cup sites set

WASHINGTON (AFP) — California's 100,000-seat Rose Bowl, where Brazil won the 1994 men's World Cup, has been selected to host the final matches of the 1999 women's World Cup, a newspaper report said on Tuesday. The Washington Post reported the championship matches will be played in Pasadena's fabled stadium while the opener of the event will be contested at Giants Stadium in suburban New York. Four other 1994 World Cup venues will host matches, including Soldier Field in Chicago, RFK Stadium in Washington, Foxboro Stadium in Foxboro, Massachusetts, and Stanford Stadium in Palo Alto, California. Civic Stadium in Portland, Oregon, was also chosen as a 1999 site, the report said. The three-week, 16-nation tournament will be contested in June and July. A formal announcement of plans is set for Wednesday in New York. The U.S. team, as host, receives the only automatic berth in the event but other top contenders include 1995 champion Norway and runners-up Germany, plus Japan, England, Australia, China, Sweden, Brazil, Canada, Nigeria and Denmark. The U.S. squad won the Olympic gold medal last year in Atlanta.

Barkley sidelined with injury

HOUSTON (AFP) — Charles Barkley was hoping to renew his rivalry with New York's Charles Oakley here on Tuesday, but a groin injury forced the talkative Houston forward to the bench. Barkley will be sidelined for a week with the injury suffered in a 96-94 loss in his former club, Phoenix, on Sunday. Barkley, 34, missed 25 games last season with various ailments. "I just can't catch a break," Barkley said. The same is true of the Rockets, whose 3-5 record is among the National Basketball Association's worst marks. Oakley launched the latest attack in the war of words with "Sir Charles" by saying the league "babysits" Barkley and the Rockets have suffered by obtaining him. "They try to make it his team instead of Hakeem's (Olujaun) and Hakeem has won two championships there without him," Oakley said. "He was a bad addition because they haven't won anything with him, nothing but adversity." Barkley was overweight when pre-season workouts began and not helped by the controversy of burling a man through a plate glass window in Orlando last month. Barkley has also criticized Olujaun for complaining he was not being given the ball in the waning moments of critical games.

FIFA suspend Salvadorian coach

SAN SALVADOR (AFP) — FIFA, world football's governing body, suspended El Salvador's national coach Milovan Djoric for six months here on Tuesday. Julio Martinez, spokesman for the Salvadorian Football Federation (FEDEFUT), told AFP that FIFA had taken their action because of Djoric's allegations on October 5 that Mexico had been helped by the referees during their CONCACAF World Cup qualifiers. The Mexicans had protested to FIFA over Djoric's remarks who had also fined him \$11,000. Martinez added that FEDEFUT had not decided whether to appeal against the decision yet. El Salvador finished fourth in the group, one place behind the last automatic qualifying position which was taken by Jamaica, with the United States and Mexico the other qualifiers.

Nilsen starts with AC Milan

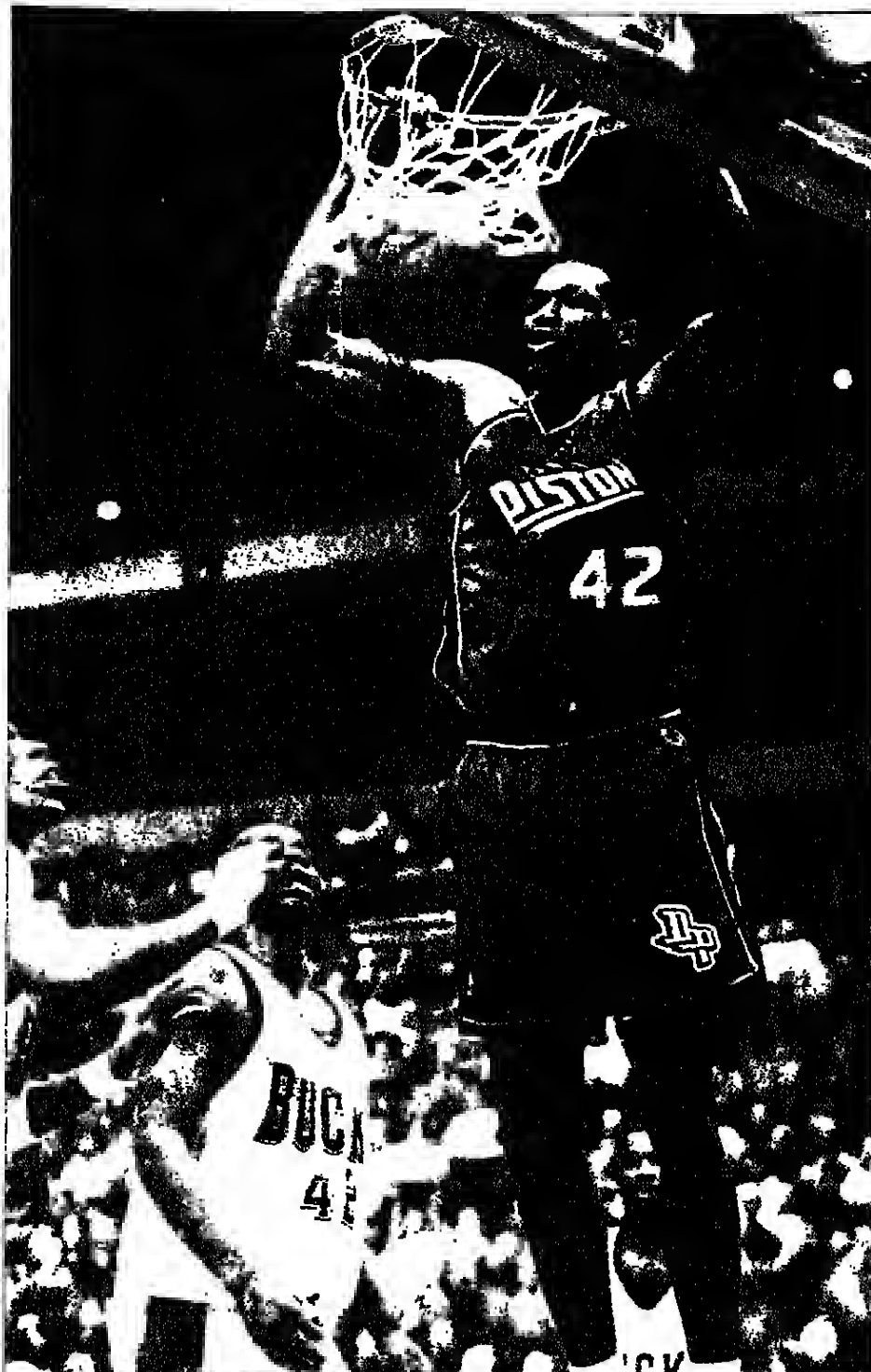
MILAN (AFP) — AC Milan's new Norwegian defender Steinar Nilsen has started his new life in the Italian Serie A with one aim — staying here. Nilsen, signed from Tromso two weeks ago, said after his first training session at his Milan base: "It's tremendous here, it really is a dream come true." However, coach Fabio Capello may yet decide to loan the 25-year-old to Milan's satellite club, second division Monza. "Capello has to decide my future," Nilsen said. "But I'm going to work hard and try to convince him to keep me here." The AC Milan coach said: "He's made a good impression, but I'd want to see him in a real match first before making a judgement."

Swiss to bid for Euro 2004

GENEVA (AFP) — The Swiss Football Association (ASF) announced here on Tuesday that they would be bidding to host the 2004 European championships. Marcel Mathier, president of the ASF, believes they have a good chance of beating Spain and a joint Austro-Hungarian bid because two of football's main ruling bodies UEFA, European football's ruling body, and world governing body FIFA celebrate their 50th and centenary birthdays respectively that year — and both are based in Switzerland. Mathier, who says that all the required infrastructure will be in place by that time, added that he envisaged the innovative move of playing several of the matches in countries which bordered Switzerland, such as France, Germany and Italy — but Swiss officials would still be in charge of the organisation. The final choice as to who will host the 2004 finals will be made by UEFA's executive committee in June 1999. The Netherlands and Belgium are set to be the first countries to co-host a major finals when they put on the Euro 2000 finals.

Hopkins keeps middleweight crown

UPPER MARLBORO, Maryland (AFP) — Bernard Hopkins won a unanimous 12-round decision over fellow American Andrew Council here Tuesday to retain his International Boxing Federation middleweight title. Hopkins won his sixth title defence, but could not manage a stoppage as he had in the first five defences. Hopkins won by two judges' scores of 118-106 and 119-105 from the third judge. Hopkins rose to 33-2 with one draw. The victory fell to 27-6 by losing in his home area. The victory advances Hopkins into another defence early next year against former world champion Simon Brown of nearby Mount Airy, Maryland.



Detroit Pistons' center Theo Ratliff slam dunks as Milwaukee Bucks' center Ervin Johnson (L) and forward Tyrone Hill (42) can only watch in the first quarter at the Bradley Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Reuters photo)

Bryant seals Lakers win over Utah; Rockets beat Knicks

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Kobe Bryant blocked Bryon Russell's 3-point attempt with five seconds left and went in for an uncontested windmill dunk to seal the undefeated Los Angeles Lakers' 97-92 victory over the Utah Jazz on Tuesday night.

With four seconds left and the Lakers up 95-92, Russell took an inbound pass and squared up from 25 feet. But the ball was swatted to mid-court by Bryant, who then scooped it up and dunked with six-tenths of a second to play.

The win gave Los Angeles (9-0) the best start in team history and kept the Lakers in the ranks of the undefeated along with the Atlanta Hawks.

Karl Malone led the Jazz with 26 points, while Nick Van Exel added 19 for the Lakers.

• Hawks 98, Wizards 89, OT: In Atlanta, rookie Ed Gray scored seven points in overtime as unbeaten Atlanta rallied in the fourth quarter and then shut out Washington in the extra period.

Christian Laettner and Mookie Blaylock scored 24 points apiece for the Hawks, whose 11-0 start is the best in the NBA. Gray, playing in place of Steve Smith (back spasms), finished with 14.

It was the second overtime victory this season for Atlanta, which has had only one double-digit margin of victory — 11 points — in its streak. The Hawks have won 10 straight overtime games dating to the 1994-95 season.

• Rockets 95, Knicks 84: In Houston, Hakeem Olujaun found his shooting touch with 24 points and Matt Maloney finished one shy of his career-high with 23 as Houston beat New York.

Houston snapped its four-game losing streak and ended New York's three-game victory streak.

John Starks led the Knicks with 29 points and Charlie Ward had 14.

Kevin Willis started in place of Charles Barkley, who will miss at least the next three games with a left groin strain suffered in Sunday. Willis had 17 points and nine rebounds and Clyde Drexler scored 16 for the Rockets.

• Timberwolves 108, Suns 90: In Phoenix, Stephon Marbury scored 11 of his 23 points in the final 5:13 as the Timberwolves used a late surge to beat Phoenix.

Kevin Garnett led Minnesota with 26 points and Tom Gugliotta added 20 points. 10 rebounds and eight assists. But it was Marbury who ended Phoenix's final comeback bid by spearheading a 15-0 run that helped turn a tight game into an 18-point margin of victory.

Kevin Johnson had 27 points to lead the Suns and Danny Manning had 12 of his 20 points in the fourth quarter. Rex Chapman added 19, but only four came after the first quarter.

• Bucks 87, Pistons 79: In Milwaukee, in a game that featured the second-lowest scoring first half in NBA history, Ray Allen and Terrell Brandon scored 21 points apiece as Milwaukee beat Detroit.

Milwaukee led just 31-29 at the half, and the combined 60 points was only two more than the NBA record of 58 scored by Syracuse and Fort Wayne on Jan. 25, 1955.

Detroit, led by Brian Williams with 23 points and 10 rebounds, scored 21 points in the third period and 29 in the final quarter to avoid matching the lowest point total in team history (71).

• Magic 112, Clippers 94: In Orlando, Mark Price, snapping out of a major shooting slump, hit 10 of 13 shots and scored 23 points as Orlando defeated Los Angeles.

Price, who entered the game 1-for-17 on 3-pointers this season, hit three straight treys in the third period to spark the Magic to their third straight victory. he also had eight assists and eight rebounds.

Rony Seikaly added 21 points and 11 rebounds and Gerald Wilkins came off the bench to score 17.

• Celtics 122, Raptors 109: In Toronto, Dee Brown went 4-of-4 on 3-pointers in the first half as Boston built a 23-point lead and cruised to its fourth straight win.

The four-game winning streak, which includes two victories over the Raptors, is the Celtics' longest since they won five straight from March 31 to April 9, 1995. Toronto has lost seven straight.

Brown finished with 16 points, all in the first half, and Walter McCarty scored a team-high 18 for the Celtics, who improved to 5-5 under first-year coach Rick Pitino.

• Grizzlies 100, Nuggets 87: In Denver, Blue Edwards scored 27 points and Shaheed Abdul-Rahim added 18 as Vancouver won its first road game of the season.

It was the fifth victory of the season for the Grizzlies, who didn't win that many last year until Dec. 17.

Laphonso Ellis scored 17 points in his first start for the Nuggets, who lost a franchise-record ninth time to start the season.

• Kings 102, Mavericks 95: In Sacramento, California, A.C. Green tied the NBA record by playing in his 906th consecutive game, but his team lost their seventh straight game.

Corliss Williamson had 20 points to lead Sacramento, which broke a two-game losing streak. Lawrence Funderburke added a season-high 18 points and Mitch Richmond, who had led the Kings in scoring in all nine of their previous games, had 17.

Green had 20 points and 13 rebounds for Dallas. Dennis Scott had 20 points, including 14 in the fourth quarter, and Shawn Bradley added 18.

Jordan joins 11 countries as S. West Asian Games begin

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

THE FIRST EVER Southwest Asian Games opened in Tehran, Iran Wednesday with 12 countries competing in 17 sports.

Open to men's teams only, the Nov. 19-28 event has brought together athletes from Saudi Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Oman, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan and Iran.

Jordan's 37-member delegation comprises 19 athletes competing in 8 events: Athletics, boxing, fencing, badminton, tennis, wrestling, weightlifting and judo.

The games also include basketball, karate, table tennis, soccer, handball, taekwondo and swimming.

Jordan pulled out of the shooting event while the organising committee cancelled cycling and gymnastics in which Jordan was to have competed.

Competition in tennis and badminton was to have started on the opening day but results were unavailable by press time.

Jordan's top tennis players, Faris Laith Azzouni did not join the team leaving only relative newcomer Ahmad Al Hadeed in the competition.

In athletics, the participation of Arab Games gold medalist Fakrudin Fuad was in doubt after he was not given the go-ahead by physicians treating his recent spinal injury.

Wrestling and fencing start competition Nov. 21, boxing Nov. 23, weightlifting Nov. 23, athletics Nov. 25 and judo Nov. 26.

Although the Iranian Olympic Committee will be covering accommodation leaving only air-fare to be paid by the respective participating countries, many Jordanian federations have shied away, unable to cover the needed expenses.

Among the Kingdom's declining federations are equestrian, handball, basketball, volleyball shooting and table tennis.

Onlookers had criticised the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) for asking the over-burdened federations to cover expenses when their annual budgets do not correspond with their expenses — a fact that leads many excellent federations to miss participation.

However, in an effort to increase the Kingdom's competitive chances, the JOC decided to sponsor excellent players by paying for medal-winning athletes at July's Pan-Arab Games, while the rest of the participating federations will cover their own expenses.

Jordan took a total of 40 medals, includ-

ing 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze medals to finish fifth among the 19 participating countries gaining more gold medals in Beirut than in the past seven Pan-Arab Games altogether, and capping the best Jordanian participation since the event was first held in 1953.

Eleven medal-winners are included in the delegation including Tareq Najjar (athletics), Mousa Khalaf (judo), Mohammad Abu Khadijeh, Ayman Nadi, Kamal Abdul Hamid, Khaldoun Abdul Hamid and Basel Hindawi (boxing), Abdul Hakim Abu Sneh and Ismail Sheikh (wrestling), Ayed Khawaldeh (weightlifting), and Amer Natour (fencing).

Three of the federations participating in the Tehran Games were impressive in Beirut.

The boxing, athletics and weightlifting teams earned five medals each while the wrestlers took four. Judo and fencing earned a medal each.

On the other hand, the competitive form of some of the participating federations who did not take part in Beirut is unknown. Those include badminton and tennis.

Some of the declining federations had either impressive results at the Pan-Arab Games or are considered in have good teams that should be best prepared for the 9th Pan-Arab Games in 2001 which will be held in Jordan.

Table tennis took two bronze medals in both the doubles and the team event.

While basketball failed to earn a medal, Jordan has regrouped a new line-up of young stars who finished 6th in Lebanon and 7th in the recently-concluded Asian Championship. Jordan was Arab Champion in the 1985 Pan-Arab Games.

The shooting team only declined last week. Though unimpressive and easily eliminated in Beirut, the team was to have been represented by athletes from the Armed Forces and Public Security Department.

Also missing the event are the handball and equestrian teams as well as Jordan's soccer team who won the gold medal at the Pan-Arab Games.

Morley sends Leeds crashing

LONDON (AFP) — Trevor Morley struck a late winner as first division strugglers Reading marched into the quarter-finals of the League Cup after consigning giants Leeds United to a shock 3-2 home defeat on Tuesday.

The 36-year-old former West Ham star latched on to Martin Williams' cross in the 85th minute to seal a memorable victory for Terry Bullivant's men.

Reading will be joined in the last eight by Liverpool, Newcastle, Arsenal, Ipswich and Middlesbrough, who beat Premier-side Bolton 2-1.

The other two places will be decided when Chelsea play Southampton in an all-Premiership encounter at Stamford Bridge and West Ham take on Second Division Walsall at Upton Park.

Teenage goal sensation Michael Owen ensured Liverpool's progress to the next stage with a superb hat-trick to shoot down division two strugglers Grimsby at Anfield.

The 17-year-old Owen struck on 28 minutes and 45 (from the penalty spot) before completing his treble 12 minutes after the break to see off a Grimsby side who had beaten Leicester and Sheffield Wednesday earlier in the competition.

First division high-fliers Middlesbrough, who were beaten by Leicester in last season's final, were also celebrating after beating Bolton 2-1 at the Riverside Stadium thanks to a goal from Craig Hignett on 115 minutes.

Ipswich also needed extra time before beating fellow first division outfit Oxford 2-1 at the Manor Ground.

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Israeli PM counterattacks Likud Party mutineers

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned home Tuesday after five days abroad and immediately moved to quell a mutiny by leaders of his Likud Party who had plotted to oust him while he was away.

In a marathon series of meetings which began as soon as the prime minister flew in from whirlwind visits to the United States and Britain, Mr. Netanyahu held one-on-one talks with loyalists and wavering Likud leaders.

Among those summoned to Mr. Netanyahu's Jerusalem office were Science Minister Michael Eitan, Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, Deputy Defence Minister Shalom and a group of loyal Likud city mayors, officials said.

But Mr. Netanyahu put off his toughest meetings with two of the leading rebels — Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert and Communications Minister Limor Livnat — until Thursday, they said.

Mr. Livnat, Mr. Olmert and a half-dozen other Likud ministers and deputies held a spate of meetings in the previous five days focusing on ways of

removing Mr. Netanyahu as Likud leader and forcing early elections.

The mutiny was sparked not by opposition to Mr. Netanyahu's headline policies towards the Palestinians but by growing anger over his autocratic style of governing and refusal to consult Likud ministers or other leaders on key decisions.

Frustrations came to a head during a Likud convention last week at which Mr. Netanyahu allies pushed through a decision to cancel the system of internal primaries that had been used to pick the party's candidates for parliament and other posts.

The move was widely seen as aimed at giving Mr. Netanyahu firm control over the future selection of candidates — a power that would allow him to sideline potential rivals and silence Likud critics.

Critics were infuriated since Mr. Netanyahu publicly supported demands that the vote on primaries be postponed while his chief of staff, Avigdor Lieberman, lobbied successfully behind the scenes for an immediate decision on the issue.

Mr. Eitan and several other Likud figures called on Mr. Netanyahu to fire Mr. Lieberman in order to defuse the mutiny, but officials who met with the prime minister Wednesday said he had refused.

"The prime minister doesn't intend to take operative, personal steps against anyone," Mr. Shalom told Israel radio.

Mr. Netanyahu did offer to set up an internal party inquiry into the handling of last week's convention and the primary vote, but it appeared unlikely this would mollify the Likud dissidents.

The beleaguered prime minister got one badly needed vote of confidence, however, from Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, a popular moderate often cited as a potential prime minister who has also been critical of Mr. Netanyahu.

"The prime minister will continue in his role and everyone needs to join with him in trying to overcome these repeated problems," he said Wednesday.

Mr. Mordechai's position was a blow to plans spearheaded by Olmert and Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo, both

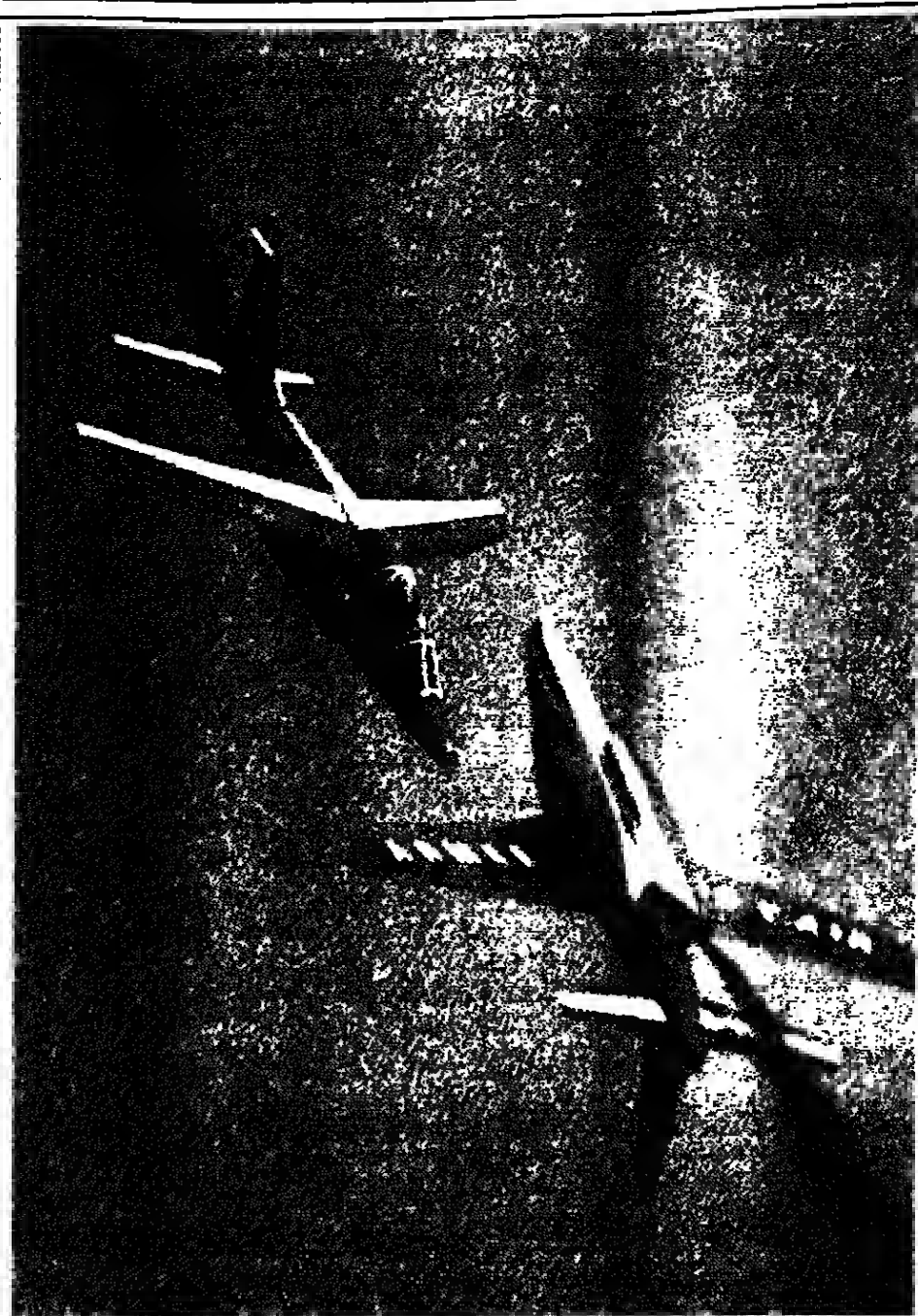
of whom make no secret of their desire to become prime minister, to manoeuvre Netanyahu out of office.

According to press reports, the dissidents were trying to form a breakaway Likud group in parliament which could join the opposition to force an early election for prime minister without prompting new legislative polls.

Under Israeli law, a simple majority of 61 members in the 120-deputy Knesset can topple the government, forcing new elections for both parliament and the legislature. A majority of 80 deputies can force a new vote for prime minister without dissolving the Knesset.

Analysts said there was little chance in the short-term that the anti-Netanyahu camp would risk forcing new general elections which could return power to the Labour Party.

But the Maariv newspaper reported Wednesday that Olmert was confident he can eventually garner the 80 votes needed to simply remove Mr. Netanyahu from disenchanted coalition deputies and the left-wing opposition.



FANCY ACROBATICS IN DUBAI SKIES: British aerospace acrobats perform during the 5th day of Dubai's airshow, Wednesday. Britain, France, Germany and Spain are expected to sign a production agreement next month for 620 multi-role Eurofighter air superiority aircraft, along with spare, support, logistics and training, in a \$45 billion package (Reuters photo)

Opposition woos Netanyahu allies as crisis deepens

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's opposition Labour Party launched an effort to break up Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's parliamentary coalition Tuesday in a bid to capitalise on a mounting rebellion within his ranks.

"We are trying to force new elections," Labour faction head Raanan Cohen told the AP after meeting lawmakers from Shas, the Third Way and an immigrants' party which together control almost a third of Mr. Netanyahu's 66-coalition members in the 120-seat chamber.

Mr. Cohen said that in order to ease concerns among coalition members who are wavering, Labour is proposing a deal whereby if its leader Ehud Barak won early elections, he would invite the now-governing Likud into a "unity government."

Shas lawmaker Rafael Pinhasi said the religious party, which has 10 seats, was "disappointed" with Mr. Netanyahu and saw Mr. Barak as "a serious candidate."

And Police Minister Avigdor Kahalani of the Third Way said that while he preferred setting up a Labour-Likud government under Mr. Netanyahu, if this proved impossible the party — which supports peace with the Palestinians and has four Knesset seats — will work toward new elections.

The next election is now scheduled for the year 2000.

Labour's campaign came amid anxious anticipation of Mr. Netanyahu's moves upon his return to Israel Wednesday — after a difficult week-long trip to Britain and the U.S. that coincided with a rebellion against him in his Likud Party.

President Clinton, apparently angered over Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to freeze Jewish settlements and advance the peacemaking, did not meet with him even though at one point their planes were reportedly a few hundred metres apart in Los Angeles.

Asked by CNN's Larry King whether he had been snubbed, Mr. Netanyahu replied: "Well, I think that leaders should meet. I think especially leaders of democratic countries... ought to meet and talk."

The problems plaguing Mr. Netanyahu are manifold: Arab and Western leaders and coalition centrists are angry because his tough policies undermined the peace process — but in Likud, dissent is mainly over his highhanded style of governance, and there are also some who believe he has gone too far to placate the Palestinians.

The Likud mutiny was provoked by last week's party convention where Mr. Netanyahu's colleagues pushed through a plan to abolish primaries — giving the power to pick Knesset candidates to a committee stacked

with Mr. Netanyahu loyalists. Senior Likud officials fear being shunted aside as Mr. Netanyahu moves to sideline possible challengers, and several of them have called for his ouster this week.

Some Likud rebels have discussed the possibility of joining Labour and other parties in a no-confidence Knesset vote to force new elections — and then trying to replace Mr. Netanyahu as their party's candidate for prime minister.

And Israeli TV stations reported that an effort by Mr. Netanyahu loyalists to circulate a petition expressing support for the premier fizzled when it emerged that only four of the party's 22 Knesset members would sign.

Still, there appeared to be good chances that Mr. Netanyahu — a master politician who has overcome near-constant crisis during 17 months in power — might survive again.

One problem is that the rebels do not agree on an alternative leader. Possibilities floated by the media included Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, former Science Minister Benny Begin, former Finance Minister Dan Meridor and Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo.

And critically, they lack a unifying ideology. Some, like Mr. Milo, strongly support the peace process; others, like Mr. Begin, want it stopped.

Iran starts sending back envoys to EU capitals

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Wednesday began sending back its ambassadors to European Union (EU) capitals, seven months after they were recalled in a dispute with the EU over a German court ruling, an Iranian official said.

A first group of EU ambassadors returned here last week and those of France and Germany are to arrive Saturday after an agreement was reached to end the diplomatic crisis sparked by charges of terrorism against the Islamic republic.

The fit-for-far recall of EU and Iranian envoys came after a German court on April 10 implicated Iranian leaders in the 1992 murder of opposition leaders in Berlin.

Morteza Sarmadi, deputy foreign minister for European affairs, told Iran's official news agency IRNA that all the Iranian diplomats would gradually return to their positions.

IRNA said the Iranian ambassador to Italy, Majid Hedayat-Zadeh, was the first diplomat to leave here for his post on Wednesday.

The EU states recalled their diplomats following the German court ruling, a move reciprocated by Iran, and when they decided to send them back Tehran insisted that the German envoy had to return last and alone — a condition rejected by the EU as "discrimination and unacceptable."

Mr. Sarmadi warned that Iran "will not have the same relations with all the EU member countries" following the dispute.

"Because of the behaviour of certain (EU) countries, there is a negative perception in Iran with respect with long-term relations with them. They have to try to wipe out this negative perception in future," he said, apparently referring to Germany.

"The understanding that individual EU states show for the realities of the Islamic republic, especially after the taking office of the new government [of President Mohammad Khatami] determines the level of our ties with them," the Iranian official added.

"We seek cooperation with Europe as a fundamental policy on the condition that it guarantees mutual respect and interests," he said.

Debate brews in Iran over legitimacy of supreme leader

TEHRAN (AFP) — The constitutional legitimacy of Iran's supreme leader, the backbone of the Islamic theocracy, is coming under pressure from growing calls for democratisation of the country's political system.

Since the landslide election of moderate President Mohammad Khatami in May, questions have been raised about all-encompassing powers vested by the constitution in the leader, a post occupied by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Growing numbers of moderate critics within the political establishment favour transferring at least some of Ayatollah Khamenei's powers to the president, whose mandate is seen as an expression of the popular will.

Such arguments have been raised with striking frequency in recent months, infuriating hardline conservatives and taking aim at the heart of the theocracy which draws its legitimacy from Velayat-e-Faqih — the rule of supreme jurist in Islam.

"Enemies, knowingly or unknowingly, are targeting the spine of the regime," Hossein Irani, a conservative MP from the holy city of Qom in central Iran, said Tuesday.

The system of "Velayat" was established after the 1979 Islamic revolution to serve as a guardian of the religious government and ensure that elected officials perform to his standards.

Ayatollah Khamenei, like

his predecessor Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, enjoys powers beyond any popular political mandate. He controls the armed forces, the judicial system, much of the media, the official clerical establishment and sets the general policy guidelines, notably in foreign relations.

While in the revolution's early years, the challenge to "Velayat" came only from Western-style liberal democrats, such opposition has now spread to Islamic moderates and leftwingers within the establishment.

A radical group, demanding fundamental changes in the Islamic republic, called recently for the leader to be elected by suffrage and for his powers be curtailed.

Under the constitution, the supreme leader must be appointed by the Assembly of Experts, a body of high-ranking Muslim clerics elected by popular vote.

Calls for limiting the leader's powers have struck a sensitive chord within the conservative religious establishment, which demands "absolute obedience" to the leader, with many members labelling such thoughts as blasphemy.

At a session of the parliament on Tuesday, several conservative deputies shouted slogans against "those who challenge the authority of the supreme guide and weaken the fundamental principles of the regime."

Deputy Speaker Mohammad-Ali Movahedi Kermani, an arch conservative, warned that the new challenges could lead to tension and dared the president to take a "clear stand" on the issue.

The challenge to Ayatollah Khamenei is mostly coming from the supporters of Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, a once-influential cleric who disgraced nearly a decade ago by the late Ayatollah Khomeini after he criticised the excesses of the Islamic regime against opposition groups.

The debate has spread to the holy city of Qom, a stronghold of the Shiite clergy, where several demonstrations have taken place during the past days in support of President Khatami.

"Velayat-e-Faqih is an inseparable part of the constitution," said Qom's Friday prayer leader, Ayatollah Ali Meshkini.

The schools of theology in Qom, meanwhile, announced they would not hold classes on Wednesday to allow students to attend a gathering in support of the leader.

On Saturday, the office of a student activist group was vandalised and its leader, Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, severely beaten up after he called in a rally for Ayatollah Khamenei's powers to be reduced.

Britain pushes for positive stance on Turkey's EU membership quest

LONDON (AFP) — Britain on Wednesday said it would argue for a positive stance towards Turkey's desire to join the European Union (EU) at a special EU jobs summit in Luxembourg on Thursday and Friday.

"The U.K. will stress the strategic importance of maintaining the Western orientation of Turkey," a British official said.

"Turkey's accession to the EU must be subjected to the same criteria as others. There should be no new cultural Berlin Wall" in Europe, the official added, although acknowledging that Ankara's human rights record "must be improved."

Prime Minister Tony Blair will put forward the British position to other EU leaders at a working dinner on Thursday

evening, where a range of international issues will be discussed.

Eleven countries (ten eastern European states and Cyprus) are standing in line for membership of the EU.

The European Commission in July recommended the EU to begin next year full membership talks with five eastern European countries and Cyprus.

Britain said it favours Turkish membership of the so-called Standing Conference, which is intended to provide a forum to bring together existing EU members, the leading candidates for early membership and those for whom accession is a distant prospect.

Turkey's 1987 application for full EU membership was turned down in 1989, but

Ankara in recent years renewed its bid.

The EU's 15 members are widely divided over how to handle Turkey's application to join the union, with France and Italy favouring Ankara's membership in the long-term and Greece and Germany opposing admission for the Turks.

EU officials say Turkey's large population of 65 million people, its economy with a 90 per cent annual inflation rate, Ankara's poor human rights record and its disputes with Athens and the Cyprus problem are main obstacles to Ankara's joining the union.

Turkish officials also privately complain that predominantly Muslim Turkey is not wanted by many Christians in the EU.



Girl to Queen Mother: No lifts from strangers

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Queen Mother stopped her car to help a girl who had fallen off her bicycle and offered her a lift, but was refused because she was not recognised, press reports said. The 97-year-old instructed her chauffeur to give first aid to the youngster, whose face was said to be bleeding after the accident on Sunday on the Long Walk in Windsor Great Park, near Windsor Castle. But when the Queen Mother offered to take the girl home, she was told: "I'm not supposed to take lifts from strangers."

German student fakes own kidnapping in family love test

MUNICH (AFP) — A student faked his own kidnapping to see if his parents still loved him and how much they would pay to get him back. The 22-year-old sparked a major police alert when his purported kidnappers sent his parents a fax saying they would kill him unless they paid \$295,000 into a bank account. His parents duly paid up and, his pride satisfied, the student reappeared Tuesday. But his contradictory explanations soon gave the game away and he blurted the truth. Police in any case had worked out that things were not what they seemed — the bank account number was in his name.

Spice Girl jokes flavour of week as girls fall from favour

LONDON (AFP) — "How do Spice Girl brain cells die? Alone!" said a British tabloid Tuesday. As Brito's new Fab Five hit a bunch of snags after a year of pop bliss, the Mirror let loose Tuesday with a page of Spice Girls gags it described as "the funniest things since Baby Spice tripped in her platform shoes." One example: "Geri walked into a bar with a pig tied to a piece of string. 'Where the hell did you pick up that filthy thing?' asked the landlord. 'Won it in a raffle,' said the pig." The Mirror called on readers to send in more gags, promising to "send them to the Girls to cheer them up."

Santa joins danger toys protest

AMSTERDAM (AFP) — Christmas Father joined Greenpeace campaigners protesting against the use of soft PVC in toys, which they say can contain dangerous additives. Like the famous jolly white-bearded man normally seen only at Christmas, the environment campaigners also carried bags of toys, but this time dumped them in front of a hotel hosting a world conference of PVC manufacturers. Greenpeace said studies had shown that certain soft PVC products contained dangerous chemical additives, while others had lead and cadmium. It said the European Commission had warned European Union member countries in July of the dangers of such toys.

Michael Jackson will not hold concert in Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AFP) — Pop superstar Michael Jackson will not stage a much-publicised concert in Hong Kong next year and promoters have been warned to stop saying that he will, a report said. "There is no Michael Jackson concert to take place in Hong Kong in March 1998," John Lavelly Jr., a Los Angeles-based lawyer representing Jackson, was quoted as saying by the Hong Kong Standard. The lawyer's statement reportedly also warned promoters and the venue's board of governors to stop saying Jackson would be performing.